HISTORICAL MEMOIRS

OF

RELIGIOUS DISSENSION.

[Price 2s.]

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OF

RELIGIOUS DISSENSION;

ADDRESSED TO THE

SEVENTEENTH PARLIAMENT

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

PRO REGE ET GREGE.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. MURRAY, N° 32, FLEET STREET.
M.DCC.XC.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE object of the following pages is, to examine and illuſtrate the principles and actions of the Proteſtant Diſſenters; and to contraſt their actual conduct with their profeſſions of attachment to the eſtabliſhments in church and ſtate. Their determination to perſevere in their attacks upon the Teſt Laws, and the meaſures which they have adopted in order to ſecure ſucceſs in their future application to parliament, appear ſufficiently clear from their own deliberate reſolutions. "*It is our* "*earneſt wiſh, that, either in the next ſeſſion of parli-*" *ament, or in the* firſt ſeſſion after the next general "election, *every congregation of Proteſtant Diſſenters* "*throughout the kingdom ſhould, either ſeparately or* "*jointly, petition the Houſe of Commons for the repeal* "*of the Teſt and Corporation Acts.*"

"*We think it deſireable that the whole body of Pro-*" *teſtant Diſſenters ſhould ſhew a ſteady regard, at the* "*enſuing general election, to the ſupport of thoſe can-*" *didates for ſeats in parliament, whom they have reaſon* "*to believe friendly to the cauſe of civil and religious* "*liberty.*"—*See Reſolutions of the Meeting of Dele-gates from eight Congregations of Diſſenters, held at Warrington, January 6th, 1790.*

" *It is our earneſt wiſh, that, either in the next ſeſſion* " *of parliament, or* in the firſt ſeſſion after the next " general election, *&c.*" *as above.—See Reſolutions of the Meeting of Prot. Diſſ. held at Bolton, December 17th,* 1789.

" *Let it ſuffice to ſay, at preſent, that we are not* " *diſcouraged by our late defeat; but ſhall cheriſh the* " *confidence, that, when application for relief from our* " *grievances is renewed, we ſhall not be cenſured as* " *obſtinately perſiſting in* fruitleſs attempts. *The time* " *will ſpeedily arrive, when a generous nation, that of* " *late has been miſled by falſe alarms, and inſidious and* " *bigotted miſrepreſentations, ſhall return to calmer* " *feelings and more ſober reflection. A reſtoration to* " *our rights* muſt *neceſſarily reſult from the progreſs* " *of truth, juſtice, and ſound policy.*"—*See Addreſs to the People of England from the Committee of Prot. Diſſ. dated London, May 11th,* 1790: *Edward Jefferies, chairman.*

" *Should king, miniſter, and prelates be arrayed* " *againſt them, let not the Proteſtant Diſſenters ſhrink* " *from the conteſt.—Defeated in their firſt attempts, let* " *them not abandon their object, but repeat their appli-* " *cation till the voice of reaſon ſhall be heard.* By " perſeverance they muſt be victorious." —*The Right of Prot. Diſſ. &c. aſſerted, p.* 99.

TO THE

REPRESENTATIVES

OF THE

PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

AMONGST the many ſubjects that may be agitated during the period of your truſt, there will be few of greater national importance than the exiſtence of the preſent Teſt Laws. The main queſtion relative to their uſe and deſign has been intentionally confounded amidſt ſpecious arguments for *political freedom*, and claims for *perſonal merit*. Since their late defeat, it has been contended on the part of the Proteſtant Diſſenters, that the human mind is not yet ſufficiently matured by knowledge, or humanized by philoſophy; but that the rapid progreſs of truth, and the true notions of liberty, which begin to poſſeſs *the multitude*, are the

ſeeds of a ſalutary revolution, which, being cheriſhed by the culture of a *more indulgent* Parliament, will ſhortly expand into the perfect bloom of liberty, and overſhadow every ſemblance of eccleſiaſtical polity and form of worſhip.

The political ſervices of the Diſſenters, likewiſe, are urged as a ſubject worthy of your conſideration, and as deſerving of a juſt recompence. Their principles and their actions are appealed to as the proper teſt of their attachment to the civil conſtitution; and it is in conſequence of this poſition, and in conformity with this favourite doctrine, that the following ſheets, which are detached from a larger plan *, are at preſent ſubmitted to your notice;

* It is intended to ſubmit the following ſubjects to public notice:

1. The harmony of civil and religious polity.

2. The importance of a national church, and the abſolute neceſſity of certain teſts to maintain and ſecure it.

3. The Hiſtory of the preſent Teſt Laws, with every recent objection to them impartially conſidered.—And a tranſient view of the Bangorian controverſy.

4. Nature and object of free enquiry.

5. Extent

notice; not as compriſing the merits of the main queſtion, but as collecting from hiſtory and precedent a true and judicious eſtimate of the real ſervices of the Proteſtant Diſſenters.

It is to the peculiar honour of the late parliament, that it reſiſted ſucceſsfully three ſeveral attacks on the eſtabliſhed conſtitution of this country; and it is worthy your obſervation, that ſanguine hopes are cheriſhed by the friends to the repeal of the Teſt Laws, from what is now termed, the *more enlightened* Members of the preſent Legiſlature. But it

5. Extent of abatements and relaxations, in view of promoting uniformity.

6. Ill conſequences of the repeal of the preſent teſts, to the ſtate, the clergy, and the public ſeminaries.

7. Reaſons why ſucceſs cannot attend the petition of the Diſſenters.

From this ſketch it is obvious, that the ſubject under diſcuſſion, viz. "The actual conduct of the Proteſtant "Diſſenters, contraſted with their profeſſions of attach-"ment to the eſtabliſhments in church and ſtate," has in its preſent detached form many unfavourable circumſtances to combat; and it would not have been at this time expoſed to notice, if it had not a temporary reſpect, I mean, the determination of the Proteſtant Diſſenters to renew their application to parliament, and their confidence of ſucceſs with the preſent legiſlature.

becomes

becomes you to reflect, that the preſent Teſts were intended, by our experienced anceſtors, *to guard againſt what men may do:* and if, in an evil hour, you ſhould conſent to their abrogation, your country is thenceforward reduced to this inevitable deſtiny, *to truſt to what men will do.* A generous and grateful people has now chearfully extended their confidence to you, implicitly relying on your wiſdom, and truſting that their preſent happy conſtitution, in church and ſtate, will be maintained pure and undiſturbed, and that their beſt intereſts will never be betrayed by a vote of the Seventeenth Parliament of Great Britain.

That you may preſerve inviolate thoſe ſacred rights which have been recently entruſted to you, is the ardent wiſh of one, who has the *real intereſts* of Proteſtant Diſſenters much at heart.

28 OC 62

Auguſt 1ſt, 1790.

PREFACE.

PREFACE.

AN author who undertakes a ſubject of ſuch latitude and variation as the "Hiſtorical "Memoirs of religious Diſſenſion," would find it very difficult to execute his deſign, either for the information of his readers, or the perſpicuity of his own ideas, if he did not diſtribute his ſubject under certain general heads and diviſions. Convinced of the utility of ſuch arrangement, I have adopted a plan, which is to take in the whole merits of the queſtion of late ſo generally agitated, "The repeal "of the Teſt and Corporation Acts;" a queſtion, which has intereſt enough in it to awaken the attention of every man who regards the welfare of the community, and the proſperity of the civil and religious eſtabliſhments.

In the following remarks I may be thought by ſome to have treated the Proteſtant Diſſenters with too much aſperity. To ſuch I beg leave to ſay, that, from

from the outſet of my enquiry, I have had thoſe only in view, whoſe political *conduct* has been directly oppoſite to their *profeſſions* of good-will. The principles of theſe men, and their attachment to our conſtitution in church and ſtate, may be very fairly meaſured by this hiſtorical ſtatement of their *actions*. The peaceable citizen, whether a conformiſt or nonconformiſt, is equally entitled to attention and reſpect: on ſuch theſe ſtrictures cannot fall; for, as they relate little to theological diſputes, and are ſolely intended to diſcuſs the political merits of the Diſſenters, they are applicable to thoſe only who diſturb the tranquillity of that government, which extends to all its members the bleſſings of civil and religious liberty.

I am as ſenſible as any man, that there are, amongſt the Proteſtant Diſſenters, men truly eminent for piety, virtue, and moderation. Far be it that a tittle of cenſure ſhould fall on ſuch: indeed there cannot, in the preſent inſtance; for, as they do not ſtand accuſed, no imputation of faction, or of inſincerity, will attach to them. But ſhould the peaceable and moderate Diſſenter feel ſome ſmart, ſome compunction, from theſe remarks, it muſt be attributed either to the miſconduct of his diſtempered brethren, or to his having, in ſome remote degree, connected himſelf with them in their late injudicious meaſures. In either caſe, I am to be acquitted

acquitted of detraction, but muſt remind this reſpectable citizen, that

"The mildew'd ear may blaſt his wholeſome brother."
SHAK.

Having premiſed thus much, it may be proper to aſſign ſome reaſon for my preſent appearance at the tribunal of the public. I have witneſſed, in common with others, the late diſturbance of the public tranquillity, under the ſpecious pretext of obtaining an extenſion of civil and religious liberty. I have ſeen too, with concern, that the abettors of the propoſed reformation are firmly reſolved to perſevere in their attempts to aboliſh thoſe fences of the conſtitution, which the common anceſtor has eſtabliſhed: and, as I am as nearly concerned in the maintenance and ſupport of them, as the Diſſenters may be in their demolition, I have taken ſome pains to enquire into the merit of their preſent enterprize, and the reach of thoſe arguments upon which they found their claim. My preſent object, then, is to clear their ſpecious arguments from that fallacy and ſophiſtication in which they are enveloped, and not to widen a breach already too expoſed, by entering into theological controverſy.

I have only to requeſt my reader, not to impute any intemperance, which he may fancy he diſcovers in

in the following pages, to a want of candour or of good-will for the Diſſenters, as ſuch, but to that diſguſt which is natural to every man who ſees religion, the chief band of ſociety, made a ſtalking-horſe to diſturb that tranquillity which we *may* all enjoy under an adminiſtration ſo mild and equal as the preſent.

My ſentiments upon a difference in religious opinions, as affecting the public peace, and my abhorrence of perſecution for conſcience ſake, I ſhall leave with my reader in the words of an illuſtrious ſtateſman and conſummate politician,

" Of this I may give only this advice, according " to my ſmall model:—Men ought to take heed of " rending God's church by two kinds of contro- " verſies: The one is, when the matter of the point " controverted is too ſmall and light, not worth the " heat and ſtrife about it, kindled only by contra- " diction. For, as it is noted by one of the fathers, " *Chriſt's coat indeed had no ſeam; but the churches* " *veſture was of divers colours:*" whereupon he " ſaith, " *In veſte varietas ſit, ſciſſura non ſit;*" " they be two things, unity and uniformity.—The " other is, when the matter of the point contro- " verted is great, but it is driven to an over-great " ſubtilty and obſcurity, ſo that it becometh a thing " rather ingenious than ſubſtantial. A man that is " of judgment and underſtanding, ſhall ſometimes " hear ignorant men differ, and know well within

" himſelf, that thoſe which ſo differ mean one
" thing, and yet they themſelves would never
" agree. And if it come ſo to paſs, in that diſtance
" of judgment which is between man and man,
" ſhall we not think, that God above, that knows
" the heart, doth not diſcern that frail men in ſome
" of their contradictions intend the ſame thing, and
" accepteth of both? The nature of ſuch contro-
" verſies is excellently expreſſed by St. Paul, in
" the warning and precept that he giveth concern-
" ing the ſame, * *Devita profanas vocum novitates, et*
" *oppoſitiones falſi nominis ſcientiæ.* Men create op-
" poſitions which are not, and put them into new
" terms ſo fixed, as whereas the meaning ought
" to govern the term, the term in effect governeth
" the meaning.—Concerning *the means of procuring*
" *unity*; men muſt beware, that in the procuring
" or muniting of religious unity, they do not diſ-
" ſolve, and deface the laws of charity, and of hu-
" man ſociety. There are two ſwords amongſt
" Chriſtians, the ſpiritual and temporal; and *both*
" *have their due office and place in the maintenance of*
" *religion.* But we may not take up the third
" ſword, which is Mahomet's ſword, or like unto
" it: that is, to propagate religion by wars, or by
" ſanguinary perſecutions to force conſciences, ex-

* " Avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppoſitions of
" ſcience falſely ſo called." 1 Tim. vi. 20.

" cept

" cept it be in caſes of overt-ſcandal, blaſphemy, or " intermixture of practice againſt the ſtate: *much* " *leſs to nouriſh ſeditions, to authorize conſpiracies* " *and rebellions, to put the ſword into the people's* " *hands*, and the like, tending to the ſubverſion of " all government, which is the ordinance of God. " For this is but to daſh the firſt table againſt the " ſecond, and ſo to conſider men as Chriſtians, as " we forget that they are men."—Sir F. Bacon's Eſſays.

ERRATA.

Page 9. Note, line 10. *for* inferences, *read* inference,
—— 24. Note, line 1. *for* brother electors, *read* readers.

28 OC 62

HISTORICAL

HISTORICAL MEMOIRS

OF

RELIGIOUS DISSENSION.

THE friends and advocates for the repeal of the Teſt and Corporation Acts have been forward in celebrating the exploits and atchievements of the Diſſenters, as one popular argument in ſupport of their cauſe. They have repreſented them as the chief authors and reſtorers of civil and religious liberty, as foremoſt in promoting ſchemes of public utility, intelligent in planning, active and intrepid in conducting them, and, in fact, as the props and pillars of the preſent conſtitution in church and ſtate. Had their pamphlets and declamations reſted here, the fond panegyric would not, in all probability, have been diſturbed, or excited attention and inquiry. But, in order to heighten the encomium, and perfect the illuſion, they have unmercifully dragged the clergy of the eſtabliſhment into an un-

happy contraſt, and, to magnify the merits of their compeers, they have overwhelmed this unfortunate deſcription of men with obloquy and deriſion.

Thus, to dignify the offices, and elevate the reputation of the diſſenting miniſtry, we are told, "*That the epiſcopal character is degraded by modern prelates, and the moſt ſacred ceremonies proſtituted to ſtate policy and perſecution* *." To promote the temporal intereſts of nonconformity, we are apprized, "*That the chief obſtacles to religious liberty lie in the bigotry and habitual bad politics of eſtabliſhed churchmen, and in the complaiſance of timid or ſubtle ſtateſmen in their favour* †." To obviate any conceit of liberal and enlightened times, we are reminded, "*That the age in which we live is unfavourable to religious freedom, that an inquiry into truth is checked by the civil powers, and the ſpread of genuine Chriſtianity chilled by the cold influence of ſplendid eſtabliſhments* ‡." And, to complete the meaſure of their ignominy, we are aſſured, "*That churchmen are unfriendly to the houſe of Brunſwick, infringers on the rights of mankind, oppreſſors, and perſecutors* ‖."

It

* Right of the Proteſtant Diſſenters to a complete Toleration aſſerted, p. 96, & ſeq.—Advertiſement to the Life of Monſ. Claude, by R. Robinſon of Cambridge.

† New and old Principles of Trade compared, p. 50.

‡ Prieſtley's Importance of free Inquiry.

‖ Prieſtley's Letter to the Rt. Hon. Wm. Pitt.—Cenſures of the ſame complexion were pretty ſtrongly implied in the ſpeeches of the Rt. Hon. Ch. J. Fox, and Henry Beaufoy, eſq; in the houſe of commous, March 3d, 1790, on the motion, That the houſe reſolve

It muſt be acknowledged that the reſolutions of the Proteſtant Diſſenters, in their late meetings *, convey more favourable impreſſions; their language is, in general, conciliating, and their profeſſions of attachment and good-will forcibly arreſt the judgment, and calm thoſe diſingenuous emotions ſo natural in contending intereſts. The mild expoſtulations of thoſe who are ſtruggling with oppreſſion, and who are pleading for a redreſs of grievances, under the perſuaſion of general harmony, and the welfare of all diſtinctions, ſpeak feelingly to the heart, and tempt us to accuſe ourſelves of partiality and want of candour for withholding implicit confidence in ſuch fair profeſſions. For my own part, as I cannot give chearful credence to theſe declarations, it is but honeſt that I ſhould aſſign my reaſons: I ſuſpect treachery ſomewhere, and, if their reſolutions are not maſked, why have not the Diſſenters muzzled their loud apologiſts?—To do juſtice to a cauſe of ſome moment, I have taken pains to examine the fair pages of hiſtory, to which they ſo frequently refer us; but from hence I have drawn intelligence not at all favourable to their ſincerity; and I have no ſcruple in ſaying, that it will require the abilities of

reſolve itſelf into a Committee on the ſubject of the Teſt Acts.

* Towards the cloſe of the year 1789, and in the beginning of 1790, the ſectaries of different denominations, aſſuming the common title of Proteſtant Diſſenters, convened public meetings throughout moſt of the counties, and many principal towns of the kingdom.

a very able caſuiſt to reconcile theſe public declarations of good-will to the preſent eſtabliſhment with the actual conduct of the leading characters amongſt the Proteſtant Diſſenters.

To examine their proceedings with that impartiality which is due to a reſpectable claſs of men, and that perſpicuity ſo neceſſary in a conteſt where much miſrepreſentation may be expected on both ſides, I am tempted to conſider them under two diſtinctions, that I may not at large impute diſſimulation and inconſiſtency to ſuch a numerous body of citizens, many of whom are no doubt men of high integrity and worth. In the following diſcuſſion I would diſtinguiſh the *moderate diſſenter* from the reſtleſs and zealous reformer. The object of the *firſt*, as far as he is concerned in the plan of innovation, is to ſoften thoſe obſtructions which have hitherto interpoſed betwixt him and the Eſtabliſhment, to which he approaches, with a view to union, as near as he conſcientiouſly can; of *the ſecond*, to pull down the national church, and to erect ſome hitherto-undefined and viſionary fabric in its room. *The moderate diſſenter*, not unmindful of the importance of church communion, and the harmony of civil and religious polity, labours for reconciliation, upon the principles of improving the reformation, and of purifying and perfecting the proteſtant cauſe; whilſt the *diſturbed ſectary*, eager to expreſs his abhorrence of rites and ceremonies, of liturgies and hierarchies, ſinks his patriotiſm in his zeal, and, like the overheated bigot of the ſixteenth

century,

century, betrays only his wiſh, "*to have one pluck* "*more at the whore of Babylon's red petticoat.*" From the furious aſſaults of the laſt, the conſtitution has not much to dread; but upon a union of theſe formidable powers, the beſt-conſtituted ſtate has reaſon to be upon its guard; for when political jealouſy is lulled into an imaginary ſecurity by the fair language of calm expoſtulation, the ſtate is, in fact, more expoſed to the furious attacks of fanaticiſm and diſaffection.

I would not, therefore, be underſtood to charge every diſſenter, who has attached himſelf to this general confederacy, with diſſimulation, or with views injurious to the public ſafety; yet, as they have thought proper to aſſociate themſelves under one general denomination *, the peaceable diſſenter, as far as he has joined intereſts with the factious ſeparatiſt, muſt be expoſed to that ſcrutiny and cenſure which may fall upon the latter, ſince he is in fact reſponſible for the exceſſes of his leſs temperate

* There is no ſmall addreſs in compriſing the various ſectaries under one general denomination of Proteſtant Diſſenter; under this ambiguous term the advocates for diſſenſion appeal to hiſtory, under the cloak of Preſbyterianiſm, for inſtances of conformity and rigid attachment to eſtabliſhments, and, as occaſion may ſerve, they ſhift to Independency in proof of their maintenance of religious freedom and liberty of conſcience. The anſwering ſuch immethodical writers may be compared to the diverſion of *hunting the duck*, in the words of Monſieur Bayle; "When I have him in full view, and fancy him within my "reach, he ſlips from me, takes a dip, and becomes inviſi- "ble."

aſſociate, agreeable to that juſt maxim of the elegant Tibullus,

" Quicquid agit, ſanguis eſt tamen illa tuus."

To the profeſſions of the firſt, great attention is due; to the influence of theſe men I attribute that moderation in which their printed reſolutions are in general couched. It is impoſſible to withhold one's approbation of the temper and diſintereſtedneſs of the following reſolutions: " That, " with reſpect to the uſe of fair reaſoning and ar- " gument, the repeal of the Acts in queſtion will " give us no advantage which we do not already " poſſeſs; and that we explicitly diſavow, as a " body, every act of intemperate zeal, and declare, " that we will not give our ſanction or ſupport to " the indiſcreet warmth of any individual *." Their open contempt of private intereſt claims alſo no ſmall notice: " While we thus aſſert our rights " to all the privileges of good citizens, we publicly " diſclaim all pretenſions to the dignities and emo- " luments which are by law attached to the eſta- " bliſhed church," &c †.

And, in proof of their ſincerity, they refer us to their uniform good conduct throughout the laſt century: " We appeal to the uniform conduct of all " denominations among us, for the ſpace of a whole " century, and particularly in two critical periods, " when there was not a ſingle Proteſtant Diſſenter " who joined the hoſtile banners of a pretender to

* Reſolution of the Meeting of Proteſtant Diſſenters of the weſt riding of York, held at Wakefield, December 30, 1789.

† Ibid.

" the

" the throne, or was ſuſpected of an attachment to " his cauſe *."

Such temperate and ingenuous language, whether under real or imaginary oppreſſion, demands attention; and if it ſhould be found, upon examination, to contain neither artifice nor ſophiſtry, who would refuſe unfeigned credit to ſuch friendly declarations? But, to examine into their declared uniformity of attachment to the conſtitution of this country, I muſt be permitted to go a little further back into hiſtory than that period whence the Proteſtant Diſſenters have thought proper to date their loyalty and good-will: this, indeed, is a juſtice due to their cauſe, ſince it will be a brief chronicle of the times when they were in power, and when under real perſecution.

To trace the progreſs of religious diſſenſion through the dark periods immediately ſucceeding the reformation, would be a tedious and unintereſting taſk; I ſhall therefore briefly obſerve, that although much greater reaſons prevailed at that time, than there do at preſent, for ſeparation, yet there was no diſagreement about the terms of church communion: Hooper, Ridley, Rogers, and others, the then controverſialiſts, were reconciled to each other; and it may be fairly preſumed that Ridley, Cranmer, and Latimer, who laid down their lives for the Eſtabliſhment, had ſearched as narrowly into the abuſes of the reformed church as any

* Reſolution of the Wakefield Meeting.

amongſt the preſent diſſenters. There was in this period no ſeparate meetings, except of ſome of the more furious anabaptiſts and ſecret papiſts, as is implied in biſhop Ridley's Articles of Viſitation, 1550 *. But the moderation of the firſt reformers, in regard to church ceremonies and eſtabliſhments, was ſuch that we find Calvin, Beza †, Peter Martyr, &c. men whoſe zeal in many reſpects carried them to great lengths, uniting upon the broad principles of reconciliation, commending uniformity, and expoſing the danger of contending for a few ceremonies, "*whether ſuch as were appointed for decency, or thoſe that were ſymbolical* ‡."

If it ſhould be ſaid, that in thoſe days the danger from the church of Rome was more imminent, and that on this account the firſt reformers were leſs vigilant, leſt by needleſs ſcrupuloſity they ſhould check the progreſs of reformation, I have this to urge, that the dread of popery was not only then, but has been ever ſince, the chief foundation of diſſenting patriotiſm.

I ſhall paſs over the ſhort reign of unrelenting Mary, as little applicable to the preſent ſubject. Upon the acceſſion of Elizabeth, and the reſtoration

* Sparrow's Canons, p. 35, 4to edit.—Stillingfleet on Separation, part i, ſect. 5.

† Beza defines the ſin of Separation to conſiſt, "not merely "in going from one church to another, but the diſcontinuing "communion with the public aſſemblies, as though one were no "member of them." Epiſt. 24, p. 148.

‡ Calvin's Epiſtle to Sadolet, de vera Reformatione.

of

of the church, the Jeſuitical party began to ſow the ſeeds of diviſion; to check the growth of which, and of a diſaffection to the ſtate which now began to manifeſt itſelf amongſt the non-conformiſts, the act of Uniformity came forth, expreſsly againſt the Diſſenters *. An open ſeparation had now taken place, as Camden informs us, "under pretence of "a purer reformation, by oppoſition to the diſci-"pline, liturgy, and calling of our biſhops, as ap-"proaching too near to the church of Rome †."

From hence then we muſt date that diſſenſion which has ſince raged with ſuch indecent violence ‡.

* In 1559, anno primo Elizabethæ.

† Annales Elizabethæ, an. dom. 1568.—This circumſtance is miſtated by a very ſhrewd writer, who profeſſes to give an *impartial* hiſtory of the Teſts, which, as he thinks, has never before been *fairly given*. This advocate ſays, "The Sacra-"ment of the Lord's Supper had been made a teſt of the prin-"ciples of the communicant here, prior to the year 1571, *which* "*was long before any Proteſtants had openly ſeparated from the Eſ-*"*tabliſhment*." Right of Prot. Diſſ. aſſerted, Pref. & p. 1.—If this writer could eſtabliſh his facts, his inferences might be fair enough, That, as the Teſts exiſted before ſeparation, they could not have been deſigned againſt Proteſtant Diſſenters.

‡ In 1568. See Stillingfleet on Separation, part i. ſect. 6 & 7.—*The notable Aſſertor* of the Rights of the Proteſtant Diſſenters affirms, "That Biſhop Stillingfleet dates the entire ſeparation "of the Diſſenters from the Church from the time of the "King's declaration of indulgence, iſſued in the year 1671-2." Such inaccuracies are ſo very frequent with this writer, that they would be overlooked, if he did not deduce his ſophiſtical inferences from them. See Rights of Prot. Diſſ. aſſerted, p. 4.

It

It has frequently been obſerved, that, in proportion to the proſperity of this country, and its ſecurity from foreign hoſtilities, religious faction has been ſeen to flouriſh. Thus, under the firm and ſucceſsful reign of Elizabeth, theſe holy feuds kept pace with its encreaſing power, and in a very few years we find a formidable party ſetting up a ſeparate worſhip in oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed church: whereas, under the feeble government of the latter Stuarts, in particular, when there were continual apprehenſions of papal power, faction forgat its nature, and ſchiſmatics crowded into ſubjection, to oppoſe the inroads of tyranny and intolerance.

Theſe early diſſenters, under pretence of more evangelical purity, reſiſted the ceremonies, habit, and doctrine of the national religion, and in a ſhort time grew ſo troubleſome to the ſtate, by attempting to confine the Queen's ſupremacy to a temporal juriſdiction, and by publicly refuſing to attend the divine ſervice of the church, that Elizabeth, in addition to the Act of Uniformity, thought it ſafe, in the year 1569, and again * in 1571, to publiſh proclamations, enforcing uniformity, and a due attendance on the ſacraments, under heavy penalties, *as a teſt of the allegiance of her ſubjects*; in conſequence of which, the laws againſt the non-conformiſts were put in force, and ſeveral of the principal diſſenters were ſuſpended, deprived, and im-

* See Sparrow's Canons.

priſoned.

priſoned *. I do not mean to juſtify theſe harſh proceedings againſt the ſeparatiſts, or the real perſecution which in ſome inſtances diſgraced this reign †. I only notice theſe ſeverities, in order to controvert thoſe unqualified aſſertions, which the apologiſts for diſſenſion make, "That the teſts "were enacted previous to ſeparation, and uni-"formly levelled againſt the papiſts;" whereas the direct contrary is the fact, they originated in ſeparation, and were deſigned as a teſt of the principles and allegiance of the non-conformiſts.

But what puts this matter beyond a queſtion, is, that at the time we are treating of, when the act of Uniformity paſſed, and the Sacramental Teſt was firſt enforced, the Papiſts were more peaceable ſubjects, more in favour with the queen, and freer

* The advocates for the diſſenters roundly aſſert "That "there was no poſitive law or injunction for perſons to receive "the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, until the popiſh plot had "put the nation in a ferment, when the ſtatute of the 3d of "James I. was enacted, 1606." Right of Pr. Diſſ. p. 2d.—Theſe writers artfully paſs over the act of uniformity, and the book of common prayer ſet forth by the common conſent of the realm, and by *authority of parliament*, in the firſt year of Elizabeth, and likewiſe her proclamation fourteen years after (viz. 1573) enjoining the magiſtrate, "to ſearch after and *puniſh* all "ſuch perſons as ſhall forbear to come to the common prayer, "*and receive the ſacraments of the church*, according to the order "in the ſaid book," &c. Sparrow's canons.—This was purpoſely levelled at the ſectaries, and not againſt the *papiſts*.

† In the latter part of this reign theſe ſanguinary laws againſt the diſſenters, which were a diſgrace to Chriſtianity, were, for reaſons of ſtate, judged proper to be repealed.

from

from perſecution, than the Proteſtant Diſſenters were: for it was not till that haughty prelate Pius V. fulminated his bull againſt Elizabeth, in 1569, that ſhe thought the popiſh a formidable party; whereas the ſectaries, by their turbulence and diſaffection to the eſtabliſhed church, threatened her ſupremacy, and the interruption of the public ſafety. It appears too, that at an examination taken before Grindal, biſhop of London, 20th June, 1567, ſeveral perſons were accuſed not only of abſenting themſelves from their pariſh churches, "but of gathering together, making aſſemblies, "uſing prayers and preachings, *and miniſtring ſa-* "*craments amongſt themſelves.*" This occaſioned the act of uniformity to be preſſed with ſome rigour, yet not more than was neceſſary; for Gilby, *himſelf a diſſenter*, inſinuates, "That if they had been let "alone a little longer, they would have ſhaken the "conſtitution of the church *."

The apprehenſions of James I. from the Proteſtant Diſſenters appears by his attempts to reconcile them to the eſtabliſhment ſoon after he aſcended the throne: but the conference held at Hampton Court for this purpoſe, failing of its deſired effect, the Diſſenters were expoſed to the ſeverities of the canons eſtabliſhed in 1603; a heavy blow upon the Papiſts, as well as the Diſſenters from the eſtabliſhed church, many of whom ſuffered at the ſtake for their diſaffection, through the horrible policy of this feeble adminiſtration.

* See Stillingfleet on Separation, p. 20.

The

The reign of Charles I. preſents us with epiſcopacy in all its ſplendor; the Puritans, to whom Charles ſeemed at firſt attached, began ſoon to take offence at the fabulous innovations * of ſome of the prelacy; and, as the Preſbyterian worſhip had been already declared to have no foundation in ſcripture, nor in the practice of the church, theſe offended ſects joined with the Independents, ever averſe to eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, and overthrew the diſcipline of the church, dethroning that unhappy monarch, whoſe over-weening attachment to the hierarchy was a principal cauſe of civil diſcord, and haſtened the ruin of the conſtitution. Hitherto we have ſeen little affection on the part of the Diſſenters, either for monarchy, or the national church, but an invariable deviation from that wholeſome advice of the old † non-conformiſts,

* Particularly ſome ill-founded reports of archbiſhop Laud.

† Baxter, an eminent diſſenter, in his Defence of the Cure of Diviſions, expreſſes himſelf in the following ingenuous terms: "The moſt learned and worthy of the old non-conformiſts, "wrote more againſt ſeparation, than the conformiſts: and the "preſent non-conformiſts have not more wiſdom, learning, or "holineſs than they: but they did not only urge the people "againſt ſeparation, but to come to the very beginning of the "public worſhip, preferring it before their private duties." p. 88. &c.—See alſo on this ſubject Beza's 23d epiſtle to biſhop Grindal, Gualter's epiſtle to Cox, biſhop of Ely, and Zanchius's epiſtle to biſhop Jewel.—I muſt ſubjoin here the opinion of John Fox, a rational non-conformiſt. This honeſt and ſenſible man, apprehenſive of the ill conſequences of that turbulent and factious ſpirit which had got amongſt his diſſenting brethren, complains, "That

miſts, for a chearful compliance and reconciliation to the legal eſtabliſhments.

We are now preſented with Diſſenſion firſt in power; how it availed itſelf may be collected, with ſufficient cenſure, from writers at all times favourable to it. As ſoon as the Preſbyterians had got the upper hand, we find them peremptorily refuſing that indulgence to others, which, during the epiſcopacy, they had ſo unceaſingly pleaded for themſelves, even to thoſe very men, who, by joining with them in the overthrow of the conſtitution, had compaſſed their eſtabliſhment. And ſo rigid were they in point of uniformity, that they even complained of a want of church power ſufficient to cruſh *the ſectaries*, as they could now call all thoſe who differed from them: to ſuch a degree of rigour did they proceed, that, by a memorable ordinance in 1645, the uſe of the common prayer book was prohibited, not only in public worſhip but in private families, under heavy penal-

" That ſome of his party began to deſpiſe him, becauſe he " could not rail againſt biſhops and archbiſhops as they did; " but, if he could be as mad as they, they would be kinder to " him. And therefore he ſoberly adviſeth the governors of the " church to look well after this ſort of men; for if they prevail, " it is not to be imagined what miſchief and diſturbance they " will bring; whoſe hypocriſy is more ſubtle and pernicious " than that of the old monks; for, under pretence of greater " purity, they will never give over, till they have brought men " under a Jewiſh ſlavery." See Fuller's Church Hiſtory, l. 9. p. 306.—Such were the ſentiments of a rational diſſenter in the laſt century.

ties;

ties; and a fine of 50*l.* was incurred by any perſon, who ſhould preach, write, or print any thing in derogation of the Directory of the preſbyterian worſhip. One inſtance of intolerance cannot be overlooked in this place, an inſtance that baffles compariſon in the darkeſt ages of unrelenting bigotry: theſe *vindicators of liberty and the rights* of man refuſed to indulge their oppreſſed monarch with the chiefeſt conſolation to inſulted feelings, and a broken ſpirit, poſitively ſtipulating, in the treaty of the Iſle of Wight, that the king ſhould not be allowed the indulgence of a common prayer book for the private uſe of himſelf and family. Till this revolution the real principles of Diſſenters were never known; they had been heretofore claiming indulgence from thoſe that were in power, but now, being veſted with authority, they became the bitter perſecutors of their rivals; and the advocates for freedom of conſcience, and the natural rights of mankind, were now transformed into furious bigots, and the engines of intolerance;

" And man, proud man,
" Dreſt in a little brief authority,
" Play'd ſuch fantaſtic tricks before high Heaven,
" As made the angels weep."

MEAS. FOR MEAS.

Perhaps, if I was to queſtion a diſſenter of the preſent day on ſuch unexampled perſecution, he might tell me that this was the act of the Preſbyterian, or of the Independent, or of the Anabaptiſt.

Vain

Vain effort at exculpation! Fruitleſs attempt to limit the operation of intolerance!—But how muſt his ingenuity be put to the teſt to parry a narrative of complicated oppreſſion! The unfortunate Mr. John Biddle, a writer of ſome eminence amongſt the Socinians, experienced, in this *æra of liberty*, the ſingular fate of having an *Anabaptiſt* for his accuſer, a *Preſbyterian* for his judge, and an *Independent* to execute his ſentence. By the former, Griffin, an Anabaptiſt teacher, who had challenged him to a public diſputation, he was betrayed, in the courſe of the controverſy, to "deny that Chriſt was God:" his illiterate opponent, unable to refute the Socinian, accuſed him of blaſphemy, and procured an order for his commitment to Newgate; in conſequence of which he was tried for his life, but his ſentence was changed by Cromwell, for baniſhment into the iſlands of Scilly *.

I ſhall be excuſed inſerting in this place the judicious remarks upon theſe times of an elegant and enlightened writer †, and the rather becauſe he was not a member of an epiſcopal church. "Theſe "broils and tumults ſerved alſo unhappily to con- "firm the truth of an obſervation often made, "that all religious ſects, while they are kept un- "der and oppreſſed, are remarkable for inculcat- "ing the duties of moderation, forbearance, and

* In 1655.—See ſhort account of the life of T. Biddle, prefixed to 1ſt vol. of Society Tracts, 1691.

† Moſheim's Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, tranſlated by Dr. Maclaine, vol. iv. p. 522.

"charity

" charity towards thoſe who diſſent from them:
" but as ſoon as the ſcenes of perſecution are re-
" moved, and they, in their turn, arrive at power
" and pre-eminence, they forget their own precepts
" and maxims, and leave both the recommenda-
" tion and practice of charity to thoſe that groan
" under their yoke. Such, in reality, was the con-
" duct and behaviour of the Puritans, during their
" tranſitory exaltation; they ſhewed as little cle-
" mency and equity to the biſhops, and other
" patrons of epiſcopacy, as they had received from
" them when the reins of government were in their
" hands."

But let us turn from this degrading picture of human nature, to that period where the diſſenters challenge our admiration, bidding us recollect that to them we owe the reſtoration of the monarchy, and the re-eſtabliſhment of the church *. Able

* " The aid of the diſſenters has more than once been
" wanted, to ſecure the civil liberties of this country, and even
" to befriend the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments of it, and it may be
" wanted again. Our anceſtors were inſtrumental both in the
" reſtoration of the Stuarts, and in the ſettlement of the crown
" upon the preſent family." Prieſtley's letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt, p. 51.

" Truſting to Charles II's declaration from Breda, the preſ-
" byterians, notwithſtanding a ſtrong oppoſition from the other
" ſects, entered heartily into his views, and compaſſed his reſto-
" ration.—By means of the reſtoration, the church of England
" was tacitly re-eſtabliſhed." See Rights of the Proteſtant Diſſenters aſſerted, p. 5.

Able panegyriſts of faction and ſedition! Let us examine a little into this ſudden change from rebellion to allegiance, from perſecution to protection. The facts, as recorded by the beſt hiſtorians, ſtand thus:—The preſbyterians, diſſatisfied that their church, although now become the national eſtabliſhment, did not empower them ſufficiently to compel rigid uniformity, were continually harraſſing the parliament for more coercive powers, in order to proſecute all thoſe who differed from them in religious opinions: upon this the army, conſiſting chiefly of independents, with independent Cromwell at their head, were violently incenſed againſt them, and betook itſelf to the deſperate meaſure of aſſuming the ſovereign power, and at laſt became ſo far maſters as to hold the preſbyterians in a ſort of ſubjection. Theſe, finding the tables now turned upon them, and that in fact they had no longer any thing more than the ſhadow of authority in the ſtate, and being now thoroughly ſenſible that their

The roman catholic claims equal notice, as the framer of the Britiſh conſtitution, and the improver of civil government: the preſent titular biſhop of London, in one of his many ingenious publications, pleads with like dexterity. "In the various "abuſe that has been thrown out on catholics, it ſeems "never to occur to any one, that many valuable parts of the "Engliſh conſtitution were framed by them.—Shall the Engliſh "catholics, then, who reared this conſtitution, at the great ex-"pence of their lives and fortunes, and who loved it in its un-"finiſhed ſtate, ſhall they hate and attempt its ruin, when it "has acquired due form and ſtability?" See Berrington on the Rights of the Diſſenters.

lot was even more ſevere than under monarchy, and the national church, began to think of reſtoring Charles II. to the throne; accordingly, upon his artful declaration from Breda, they joined the epiſcopalians, and thus aſſiſted in the reſtoration of the monarchy, and re-eſtabliſhment of the church of England.

Such then were the tender mercies of preſbyterianiſm! and ſuch the real motives of their boaſted ſervices and attachment to the conſtitution!

" So felleſt foes,
" Whoſe paſſions, and whoſe plots have broke their ſleep,
" To take the one the other, by ſome chance,
" Some trick not worth an egg, ſhall grow dear friends,
" And interjoin their iſſues," CORIOLANUS.

The aim of Charles II. to reſtore popery was ſoon ſuſpected by the diſſenters, and perhaps nothing manifeſted his intentions more than his declaration for toleration in 1672, which ſuſpended all the penal laws both againſt papiſts and diſſenters; and we find the latter quietly acquieſcing under the famous teſt act which paſſed in the following year, as more conſonant to their wiſhes, than the former clemency of their king, at the bottom of which they ſaw both popery and ſlavery. The reigns of the latter Stuarts, in particular, preſent us, at every juncture, with the jealouſies and apprehenſions of the non-conformiſts, leſt the revival of popery ſhould deprive them, in common with the

members of the eſtabliſhment, of their religious privileges, and involve them in calamities more ſevere than churchmen would be expoſed to; who, according to their own accounts, retaining much of *the old leaven of antichriſt*, would conſequently experience fewer reſtrictions *. The attachment then of the diſſenters to the eſtabliſhment, during this period, though not very conſpicuous, muſt be attributed to this cauſe—the mutual intereſts of both parties were concerned in one common oppoſition to popery, which was ever on the watch, waiting ſecretly for an opportunity to reſtore perſecution and intolerance.

The houſe of Stuart, through a ſeries of ſelfiſh policy, began now to totter; and a continuance of indiſcreet and ruinous meaſures, during the ſhort reign of inglorious James, completed its deſtruction. We are preſented in this reign with a ſingular phenomenon, *a popiſh king a ſtrenuous advocate for univerſal toleration* †. "Strange doctrine," ſays Burnet, "in "the

* Some diſſenters of the preſent times affirm that the reformation has not completely thrown down the kingdom of antichriſt, who ſtill retains dominion over the Britiſh eſtabliſhment. See Richards's free thoughts on the corruptions of Chriſtianity, 1784.

† So *tolerant* was James at this time, that he granted permiſſion to the lord mayor of London, a preſbyterian, to uſe what form of worſhip he liked beſt in Guildhall chapel: but the wary diſſenter, *being a friend to the eſtabliſhment*, refuſed the generous offer: in other words, he ſaw through the artful deſign, to engage him to make the firſt change from the eſtabliſhed worſhip, and that if a preſbyterian miniſter officiated this year, no doubt a popiſh

" the mouth of a profeſſed papiſt;" and which is only thus to be accounted for:—The clergy of the eſtabliſhment having oppoſed the artful deſigns of the court to revive popery, were diſgraced, and the diſſenters in their turn taken into high favour; theſe bore their exaltation unbecomingly: but the moſt moderate amongſt them, (and there have been moderate diſſenters in all ages) reſtrained in ſome degree the inſolence of the reſt; they ſaw that this brightneſs of royal favour was only a ſun-beam, and a deſign of the papiſts, to create an open breach betwixt them and the church party*.

But I haſten to that ſecond grand criſis of patriotiſm, to which the proteſtant diſſenters refer us, as a proof of their being *the friends to eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments, and the reſtorers of civil liberty*. There is one memorable inſtance in which their *attachment* to the eſtabliſhment, and their *zeal for civil liberty*, was not altogether ſo conſpicuous. Although I cannot paſs it over in ſilence, becauſe it greatly haſtened that glorious revolution, which, as they juſtly obſerve, they did promote; yet I ſhall be ſo impartial as to let their favourite hiſtorian † relate the circumſtance. " Towards the end of April 1688, " the

piſh prieſt would have celebrated maſs there in the next. And the cautious magiſtrate, under the wiſdom of the ſerpent, aſſumed the harmleſſneſs of the dove.

* See Burnet's Hiſtory of his Own Times, an. 1686.

† The diſſenters are fond of referring to Dr. Burnet, as an hiſtorian very favourable to their cauſe, and a declared foe to the clergy; the good biſhop, with much candour, however, cautions them not to rely too implicitly on his repreſentations.

" the king thought fit to renew the declaration, " that he had ſet out the former year, for liberty of " conſcience. Not ſatisfied with the publiſhing his " declaration, he reſolved to oblige the clergy to " read it in all their churches in the time of divine " ſervice. This put the clergy under great diffi- " culties, and they were at firſt much divided " about it. The point at preſent was not, whether " a toleration was a lawful or an expedient thing. " The declaration was founded on the claim of " *a diſpenſing power*, which the king did now aſ- " ſume, that tended to the total ſubverſion of the " government, and the making it arbitrary: whereas " by the conſtitution it was a legal adminiſtration. " It alſo allowed ſuch infinite liberty, with the ſuſ- " penſion of all penal laws, and that without any " limitation, that paganiſm itſelf might be now pub- " licly profeſſed. It was viſible, that the deſign, in " impoſing the reading it on the clergy, was only " to make them ridiculous, and to make them " contribute to their own ruin." Thus far Burnet; who, after commenting on the indecent heats of the diſſenters againſt the clergy, now become, by their manly reſiſtance of deſpotiſm, exceed- ingly obnoxious to the court, proceeds to relate, that it was by the *expreſs advice of the diſſenters*, now in the fulneſs of royal favour, that James was induced to commit to the Tower the ſix

" The peeviſhneſs, the ill-nature, and the ambition of many " clergymen, has ſharpened my ſpirits perhaps too much againſt " them: ſo I warn my reader to take all that I ſay on theſe " heads with ſome grains of allowance." Preface to the Hiſtory of his Own Times.

biſhops,

biſhops, who, in defence of the conſtitution, poſitively refuſed to read the declaration, and reſiſted this daring attempt at arbitrary power.

The abettors of this notorious tranſaction have then, in truth, the merit of greatly promoting that glorious revolution, which a few months afterwards was actually completed, by the expulſion of an infatuated bigot from the throne, and the re-eſtabliſhment of the conſtitution.

This ſhort view of the conduct of the proteſtant diſſenters for near a century and half, preſents us with the ſad effects of religious faction; we ſee the peace of the community perpetually interrupted, civil liberty trampled upon, and the conſtitution actually overturned in the tumultuous ſtruggles for religious rights and eccleſiaſtical pre-eminence. That the anceſtors of the proteſtant diſſenters were the *unprovoked* authors of theſe convulſions, I would by no means be underſtood to inſinuate; the perſecutions which their diſcontents and remonſtrances had ſo frequently brought upon them, and thoſe ſevere penal ſtatutes which the government from time to time judged neceſſary, to curb the feuds of its domeſtic enemies, and to preſerve the public peace, had now encroached largely on the liberties of the ſubject, and reduced the privileges of the non-conformiſts below the condition of free citizens: and, although they occaſionally enjoyed ſome tranſient gleams of indulgence, through the varying ſpirit of the court and miniſtry, yet their ſituation was always precarious, and they were never entirely free

from fears and perplexities; we are not then to wonder at their reſtleſſneſs, and frequent attempts to ſubvert the government, ſince it was the only chance they had of gaining the upper hand, and of ſecuring to themſelves that liberty, which this memorable revolution has ſo effectually eſtabliſhed. We are rather to wonder at that paradox in politics, in which the preſent advocates of the diſſenters have involved their cauſe, who, whilſt they are challenging, in behalf of their forefathers, an eminent ſhare of merit in conſtructing that beautiful fabric, the preſent conſtitution, are equally laviſh in their applauſes of the deſcendant for his pious attempts to deface the nobleſt monument of his anceſtor's wiſdom. This, however, may be eaſily reconciled, upon the argument of a Roman author:—" *Diſſen-*
" *tientium* res geſtæ, ſicut ego exiſtumo, ſatis
" amplæ, verum aliquanto minores tamen, quam
" famâ feruntur: ſed, quia provenere ibi magna
" ſcriptorum ingenia, per terrarum orbem facta
" pro maxumis celebrantur. *Ita eorum, qui ea*
" *fecere, virtus tanta habetur, quantum verbis ea po-*
" *tuere extollere præclara ingenia* *."

Upon

* For the ſake of my brother electors, who may have forgotten their Latin, or never learnt it, I will tranſlate the paſſage, apprizing them that I have ſubſtituted the firſt word for *Athenienſium*, which I find in the original, vid. Salluſt, Bell. Catil. 8. " As
" far as I can judge, fame ſpeaks higher of their atchieve-
" ments, great as they may be, than ſhe ought to do; this may
" be owing to the great ingenuity of their hiſtorians and pane-
" gyriſts, who have extolled their exploits to the very ſkies. It
" has

Upon the re-eſtabliſhment of the conſtitution, the diſſenters came in for that ſhare of religious liberty, to which, as a free people, they were entitled. And the act of toleration, by delivering them from thoſe penal laws which had endangered their perſons and property, reſtored them to that rank in the political ſcale, which was judged expedient, and ſafe to the conſtitution. They are well warranted then in paying a juſt tribute of applauſe and gratitude to the common anceſtor, whoſe wiſdom and virtue effected the glorious revolution, that epocha of true Engliſh liberty. The blind and implicit ſubmiſſion of James to the papal ſee, which was on the point of re-aſſuming its tyranny

" has ſo happened then that the reputation of the diſſenters, has " riſen in proportion to the wit and abilities of their apologiſts." —Mr. Beaufoy, in his very able ſupport of Mr. Fox's motion towards the repeal of the Teſts, March 3d, 1790, obſerved that the conduct of the Proteſtant Diſſenters had been exemplarily peaceable and modeſt; that in the unhappy moments of national embarraſſment, they have preferred a continuance of ſuffering to every hope of relief; that it was not till all public difficulties and anxieties were removed, that it was not till the return of the general ſtrength, that they have entreated the attention of the legiſlature to the hardſhips they have endured from the ſacramental teſts; and ſuch has been the continuance of their conduct for *more than* 120 *years!*—Credat Judæus.

WOODFALL'S DIARY.

And Sir Henry Hoghton at the ſame time declared, that, as a Proteſtant Diſſenter, he looked with pride to the hiſtory of the times *preceding* the paſſing of theſe acts.—Thus do theſe gentlemen, betwixt them, vindicate the *whole political conduct* of the Diſſenters, from the date of ſeparation (1559, or according to Camden 1568) to the preſent times.

over

over civil and religious liberty, had brought the proteſtant cauſe to the brink of ruin, and arbitrary power had nearly annihilated the rights and privileges of the ſubject. But the complaints of an oppreſſed people increaſing with the injuries that were accumulating on them, the ſeaſon was come when reſiſtance was not only juſtifiable, but a virtue: the arbitrary monarch fled from his throne, the long-conteſted limits of royal prerogative were defined, and the ſacred and inviolable rights of the ſubject aſcertained.

The mutual jealouſies that ſubſiſted betwixt William and a great part of his clergy was not a little fomented by the diſſenters, immediately after the prince of Orange was called to the throne. The king, who had a natural bias to Calviniſm, and who yielded to no prince in political abilities, had an early opportunity of ſhewing his averſion to the members of the church of England, and eſpecially the biſhops, many of whom, by their refuſal to take the oaths of allegiance, and by withdrawing from his parliament, openly diſowned his authority and avowed their contempt of his government. To mortify theſe men, whoſe ſtrong prejudices in favour of the late doctrine of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance, and whoſe notions of hereditary, indefeaſible right, and direct lineal ſucceſſion, could not be got over, William reſolved to admit the diſſenters to a ſhare in poſts under the government. To this end, as a previous ſtep, he propoſed to parliament the abolition of the Teſts; a meaſure which,

which, in the former reign, he could by no means be brought to countenance, and which, in all probability, would not have been even now brought forward, but with a view to humble the high nonjuring clergy. The attempt, however, after repeated trials, failed; yet the conteſt was eventually productive of the beſt conſequences: the diſappointed king, at a more favourable ſeaſon, obtained an Act of Parliament, which reflects equal honour on the promoter and the Chriſtian cauſe. In 1689 the Act of Toleration came forth, intituled, "An Act "for exempting their Majeſties Proteſtant Sub-"jects, diſſenting from the Church of England, "from the Penalties of certain Laws," &c *.

It is from this memorable period that the diſſenters date that liberty and indulgence which they now enjoy, and have ſo long been bleſſed with; and it might have been expected that an experience of the fatal effects of former religious conflicts, and the benefits of an enlarged and liberal toleration, would have ſealed the tranquillity of the kingdom. But, as it has been already obſerved, in proportion to the ſtability of the Engliſh government, religious faction has been often found to thrive: ſo, in the period immediately ſubſequent to the revolution, although no open hoſtilities were offered to the eſtabliſhment, nor any abſurd application made by the diſſenters for a repeal of thoſe

* In this bill the Corporation and Teſt Acts are omitted, and conſequently remain in force.

laws

laws which they, by their own voluntary acquieſcence had ſo recently ſanctioned *; yet, ſo favourable was this period to fanatical conceit, that we find a multitude of ſects ſtarting up afreſh, and again involving the people in the perplexities of controverſy and diviſion.

The clemency which was now extended to the diſſenters in England, was not enjoyed by their brethren in the neighbouring kingdoms. In Ireland an intolerant ſpirit raged amongſt the ſectaries, and they ſuffered perſecution, not as ſchiſmatics from the eſtabliſhed church, but as diſſenters from their own narrow creeds and formularies. The fate of Mr. Thomas Emlyn, a learned but unhappy Unitarian, ſufficiently illuſtrates this matter. His diſſenting brethren having diſcovered ſome heterodox opinion of his, reſpecting the incomprehenſible myſtery of the Trinity, applied, with unexampled aſſurance, to that government under which they themſelves enjoyed *no legal toleration*, and actually obtained, in 1703, from ſir Richard Pine, the then lord chief juſtice of Ireland, a ſpecial warrant to ſeize the miſerable heretic and his papers; and, leſt he ſhould eſcape the juſt vengeance of the offended laws, the pious zealots conducted him in perſon to the common gaol of Newgate; there indeed they

* The political maxim of the celebrated Junius is not inapplicable to the preſent caſe: "The ſubmiſſion of a free people "to the executive authority of government, is no more than a "compliance with laws which they themſelves have enacted." Letter 1.

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leſt him: "for," as he ſays in the Narrative of his Life, "during my confinement all my acquaint-"ance were eſtranged from me, and all offices of "friendſhip and civility ceaſed; but of all men, "the diſſenting miniſters of Dublin were the moſt "deſtitute of kindneſs. Not one of them, except-"ing Mr. Boyſe, vouchſafed me ſo much as that "ſmall office of humanity, in viſiting me when in "priſon: nor had they ſo much pity on the ſoul of "their erring brother, as they thought him, as to "ſeek to turn him from the error of his ways *."

In the ſame year, the kirk of Scotland had an opportunity of manifeſting her zeal for *pure and undefiled religion*. Upon a motion of the earl of Strathmore's, the 6th of May 1703, "for the "toleration of all Proteſtants in the exerciſe of "religious worſhip," the preſbyterians raiſed a violent and ſucceſsful oppoſition; and, forgetful of the indulgence that their brethren at that time were enjoying under epiſcopacy in England, rejected the motion with horror, exclaiming againſt ſuch *ſinful communion*, and declaring that to enact a toleration in favour of epiſcopalians, would be to *eſtabliſh iniquity by law*.

It would be foreign to my deſign to enter into a detail of the religious controverſies, or the inteſtine broils, that harraſſed the kingdom during the reign

* See Narrative of his Life prefixed to his Works, and Biograph. Dict. article Emlyn.—This gentleman afterwards fled for ſhelter to England, and became an intimate friend of the famous Dr. Samuel Clarke.

of

of queen Anne. The violent conduct of two turbulent parties disgraced this period of English history; for religion, from the first rise of the Whig and Tory factions, was always brought in as a pretext to cover the political views of either party*. The dissenters, who now constituted a great part of the Whig faction, under an idle pretence that the court and Tory party were solicitous to restore the Pretender, uniformly opposed the measures of the latter, and provoked them, after two unsuccessful attempts, to bring in and pass a bill † *to prevent occasional conformity*, and also ‡ *an act to prevent the growth of schism*, in order more effectually to humble those *dangerous schismatics*, as they affected to call their Whig opponents. These bills, however, were in reality a species of persecution, and a heavy clog on that free toleration granted at the revolution; but they originated in the turbulence of party, and

* The church was not a little distracted by the indecent contests amongst the clergy, who ranged themselves under two divisions, distinguished by the titles of High Church and Low Church. These ecclesiastical Whigs and Tories loaded each other with the most invidious epithets; the high-church men stigmatized their opponents as republicans and presbyterians, whilst their low-church brethren branded their adversaries with the appellation of Jacobites and enemies to the revolution. And these odious contests, being fomented not a little by the Dissenters, contributed in the end to fetter toleration with illiberal restrictions. They served also to furnish a very celebrated orator, near fourscore years afterwards, with argument to wound the credit of the present hierarchy; but he was *more happy in his recollection* of these odious disputes, than he was *fortunate in his application* of them to the subject under debate: March 3d, 1790.

† In 1711. ‡ In 1714.

would

would not have ſtained the clemency of this reign, if the diſſenters had not been ſo forward in promoting political feuds *. We are now arrived at a period of our hiſtory favourable to genius and literary merit. The progreſs of reaſon, and a liberal cultivation of the mental powers, had not only freed the human mind from the ſhackles of Romiſh ſuperſtition, but rendered a relapſe into popery morally impoſſible. From the influence of that unbounded liberty which each individual now claimed of ſpeaking and writing on theological ſubjects, it was natural to expect an increaſe of ſectaries; and accordingly we find the moſt abſurd and ridiculous opinions broached among the people, whilſt enthuſiaſm, under the affectation of ſuperior ſanctity, hung upon the ſkirts of pure religion.

From the whimſical attacks of impoſture and fanaticiſm the church felt little annoyance; but a falſe philoſophy, which had leagued itſelf with the-

* That there were ſeveral ſchemes, at the latter part of this reign, to reſtore the pretender to the crown, cannot be doubted; but that the queen, or the Tory party, were the inſtruments of ſuch a deſign, does not at all appear by their conduct. It is certain that the queen had ſome Jacobites about her, who ſecretly wiſhed for ſuch a revolution: but that the Tories could be brought to engage in, or even to favour, ſo abſurd a meaſure, there is not the leaſt foundation to ſuppoſe. Party writers have copied this inconſiſtent charge one after another, and deſignedly overlooked the ſpirited intention of the Tories to reſcue their ſovereign from a certain domeſtic ſlavery which held her. They ſhould have reflected that the Jacobite party would not have been ſo hardy as to counſel theſe men to alter that ſucceſſion which they had ſo lately eſtabliſhed.

ology,

ology, began now to wound the credit of revelation, and the intereſts of the orthodox faith. The malignant hypotheſes of Hutcheſon and Collins, of Tindal and of Chubb, were received in this æra of free-thinking with wonderful applauſe; their diſciples were numerous, and the intoxicating fumes of free enquiry ſhook the conviction of the unſtable, ſlackened the activity of the orthodox, and ſeduced many from the ſimplicity of the goſpel.

The eſtabliſhed church indeed had few or no open enemies to contend with, in the beginning of this century; nevertheleſs, under pretence of freedom of enquiry, and the exerciſe of reaſon, its tranquillity was wounded, and the crude fancies of infidels and fanatics obtruded on its members. For with the liberty of religious worſhip, the licentiouſneſs of enthuſiaſm and infidelity encreaſed; and ſuch was the inſolence and effrontery of the ſceptics of theſe days, that the good ſenſe of the nation was offended by their bold attacks on the being of a God, the credibility of the goſpel, and the dignity of the Chriſtian cauſe; whilſt the moſt reſpectable members of the church were inſulted by the profane wit and blaſphemous ridicule of deiſts and of atheiſts *.—Thus, although we impute the progreſs

* Such was the freedom of thinking and writing on religious points at this time, that the effuſions of impiety and extravagance, which were poured forth among the people, were more greedily ſought after and read than the manly productions of an enlightened clergy. And it is a fact, that the profane writings of

greſs of the proteſtant faith to the improvements in ſcience and philoſophy, yet we cannot forget, that with the cultivation of the human powers the ſubtilties of dialectics, and the miſchievous refinements of metaphyſical argument were introduced. No period had been ſo favourable as the preſent to literary merit; and genius, although not much encouraged by the great, flouriſhed under the culture of a liberal public; for, as a philoſophical ſpirit of free enquiry had diffuſed itſelf amongſt the people, metaphyſical reaſonings, however precarious and unſatisfactory, obtained an inauſpicious homage: and it was, no doubt, in reference to this ſpeculative knowledge, that an acute defender of the Diſſenters was led to think, "That improvements in "philoſophy have made many ſceptics in all "churches, reformed and unreformed *."

The aſcendency which this ſpirit of free enquiry had gained over the minds of men, and the reputation which philoſophy had now attained by the diſcoveries of exalted genius and ſuperior talents, contributed in no ſmall degree to the culture of ſophiſtry and ſcepticiſm. True philoſophy, indeed, like pure religion, will riſe the brighter from the reſearches and

of Toland, Mandeville, Woolſton, &c. were ſo coveted, that ſome of theſe needy ſceptics gleaned a comfortable ſubſiſtence from the corruptions of the age, and their bookſellers, notwithſtanding ſome expenſive law-ſuits, which theſe productions had involved them in, acquired conſiderable ſums by the ſale of their multiplied abſurdities.

* Preface to the Confeſſional, p. 60.

enquiries of real genius; but, under the name of ſcience, falſely ſo called, a profuſion of wild chimæras and ſpecious ſyſtems were now obtruded on the public, and their reception was favourable, becauſe they were adorned with all the elegance of fancy. The powers and genius of thoſe real philoſophers, Bacon, Newton, and Boyle, were not only exerted in the inveſtigations of experimental and natural knowledge, but were directed to the evidences and confirmation of the great truths of Chriſtianity*; whilſt ſome overweening ſophiſts, aſſuming the dignity of philoſophy and a reſemblance of theſe real ſages, pointed their feeble ſcience at the credit of revelation. The ſubtilties of metaphyſics were at this time miſtaken for the depth of real wiſdom, and becauſe men wanted diſcernment, they yielded

* The friends of Arianiſm and Socinianiſm have alternately claimed this great man as their own. Whiſton repreſented him as an Arian, and has candour enough to tell us, in the Memoirs of his own life, that Sir Iſaac Newton was ſo much offended with him for this, that he would never ſuffer him to enter as a member of the Royal Society, while he ſat at the head of it. Dr. Prieſtley, in his turn, claims him as a Socinian. The fact is, this good man juſtly abhorred the perſecution of the Non-conformiſts; and this was not inconſiſtent with his being firmly attached to the Church of England. He judged of *men by their manners*; and the true ſchiſmatics were, in his opinion, the vicious and the wicked; not that he confined his principles to natural religion, for he was thoroughly perſuaded of the truths of revelation; and, amidſt the great variety of books which he had conſtantly before him, that which he ſtudied with the greateſt application was the Bible. See Biog. Dict. article Newton; and Importance of Free Enquiry, &c. 109.

themſelves eaſy vaſſals to imaginative ſcience. The philoſophical improvements of thoſe great men threw a ſplendour over true religion, and the evangelical truths were illuſtrated and confirmed by their literary exertions: but the ſubtil refinements of Bolingbroke *, and *the civil, ſocial, and theiſtic ſyſtem*, which Shafteſbury † had derived from the antient moraliſts, were ſet up in oppoſition to the goſpel of Chriſt; and the fine wit and elegant humour with which theſe viſionaries had decked out their ſcepticiſm, was ſo well ſeaſoned to the artificial taſte and flimſy principles of the times, as to charm their numerous and deluded followers. Deiſm having thus aſſumed the title of philoſophy, infidelity triumphed at the expence of reaſon and demonſtration.

I have been induced to take this ſhort view of the ſtate of ſcience and philoſophy at the beginning of this century, in order to bring forward a deſcription

* The Eſſays on Philoſophy and Religion, which Lord Bolingbroke addreſſed to Pope, contained ſo many offenſive things againſt revelation, that they occaſioned a preſentment of his works by the Grand Jury of Weſtminſter.

† The Letters and Characteriſtics of Lord Shafteſbury are full of his viſionary ſcheme of idolizing moral virtue, at the expence of revelation. Every page ſhews him a zealous aſſerter of the *civil, ſocial, and theiſtic ſyſtem*; and his philoſophy was made up of two principles, viz. That there is a Providence which adminiſters and conſults for the whole, to the abſolute excluſion of general evil and diſorder; and, That man is made by that Providence a political or ſocial animal, whoſe conſtitution can only find its true and natural end in the purſuit and exerciſe of the moral and ſocial virtues. See Biog. Dict. article Cooper.

of Diſſenters, whoſe political conduct has not been hitherto under conſideration; my remarks having been in general confined to thoſe non-conformiſts, the Preſbyterians, Independents, Anabaptiſts, and Quakers, who, ſince the reformation, have made ſo conſpicuous a figure in the popular commotions of this country. The *Unitarian ſyſtem* having been little known in England until the middle of the laſt century, could not be conſidered as an object of political inveſtigation; for, as theſe religioniſts made no figure in the community, but were diſperſed amongſt that great variety of ſects that ſprung up after the reformation, their theological tenets, or ſocial conduct, had not excited much attention.—It is not my deſign, neither would it be conſiſtent with my plan, to examine the doctrines of Unitarianiſm, or to diſcuſs the merits of that faith, which would annihilate the deareſt intereſts of Chriſtianity*. I leave it to abler pens, and firmer nerves, to embark on this antipacific ocean of theological controverſy; my buſineſs is with the Unitarian, as a ſubject and fellow-citizen, *although not of the*

* "Socinianiſm cuts to the very root of all that is diſtinguiſhing in the goſpel. It deſtroys the neceſſity, and even the importance of a miraculous interpoſition, and gives the infidel too great reaſon to exclaim, that all that was extraordinary was ſuperfluous; and that the apparatus was too expenſive and too ſplendid for the purpoſes to which it was applied. This ſeems to be an argument à priori againſt that ſpecies of Chriſtianity, which ſome, under the pretence of refining it from corruption, would reduce to the level of natural religion." White's Sermons at the Bampton Lecture, notes, p. 68.

houſehold

houſehold of faith; and I ſhall conſider his conduct, whether Arian or Socinian, as a member of that ſociety, which affords a liberal connivance at, but no legal toleration of, his creed *.

To the ſpirit of faction, and an ardent zeal for proſelytiſm, two evils equally offenſive to civil government, we are indebted for the riſe and progreſs of this ſpiritual contagion. Driven from a country, which had afforded them countenance and protection, by an offence againſt the civil and eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments † of it, the diſciples of Socinus directed their emiſſaries to ſearch out a reſting-place. England, that land of religious liberty, that hot-bed of ſectaries, was open to the wretched exiles, and here they found a refuge from thoſe continental ſtorms which their zeal and irregularities had

* The Socinians are not included in the Act of Toleration; and by the 9th and 10th of William III. they are expoſed to ſundry diſabilities. Likewiſe by the 13th Eliz. c. 12. and the 29th Ch. II. c. 9.

† Amongſt other acts of violence which their zeal has tempted them to commit, was that famous tumult at Racow, in Poland. Their rage for reformation was vented againſt an unfortunate crucifix, which had excited their religious reſentment, and which they ſo belaboured with ſticks and ſtones, that they at laſt triumphed in its overthrow. The matter, however, did not end here, the *reformers* attracted the notice of the civil magiſtrate, and they were baniſhed Poland with the utmoſt ignominy in 1638, for this breach of the peace; but they have always gloried in their zeal and their ſufferings. "As Chriſtians, we think it our duty to "*hazard every thing*, rather than neglect to take *any meaſures in* "*our power* to propagate truth." See Dr. Prieſtley's Letter to Mr. Pitt, p. 24.—1787.

gathered round them*. The emiſſaries then of this community are firſt diſcovered in this country towards the middle of the ſeventeenth century, in the courſe of which they gained many proſelytes, ſome of whom were men of eminence and diſtinction: nor is

* The Unitarian religion, before the improvements of Fauſtus Socinus, was an incoherent ill-digeſted ſyſtem; but the conſummate abilities of this enterpriſing man diſguiſed, in great meaſure, its former monſtrous abſurdities, and gave it an air of method and connexion. Hence, according to Dr. Moſheim, the modern Unitarians are very properly called Socinians. The term Unitarian, indeed, is very comprehenſive, and is not only applied to the Arians and Socinians, but to all thoſe who reject the doctrine of the Trinity, upon which the Church of England is eſtabliſhed. Notwithſtanding the addreſs and dexterity of this able reformer, he could not preſerve his community from inteſtine diviſions. One more zealous than prudent, by his ardour and obſtinacy in oppoſing the divine worſhip of Chriſt, brought upon himſelf the vengeance of the civil authority; and it was in vain that Socinus attempted to ſoften down the error of Francis Davides, whoſe offenſive tenets were the occaſion of his being thrown into priſon, where he periſhed in 1579. Several others were baniſhed the ſociety, and ſuffered bitterly in the countries to which they had fled; but amongſt them all, the capital errors of Budnæus gave moſt uneaſineſs to Socinus; and it called forth all his abilities to colour over the daring hereſy of this man, who poſitively aſſerted, "That Chriſt was not begotten by any extraordinary act "of divine power, but that he was born like other men, and "tempted like other men." Hence he eaſily drew this deduction, "That to pay religious worſhip of any kind to Jeſus "Chriſt was idolatry." This hypotheſis, however conformable to the fundamental principles of Socinianiſm, was at this time looked upon as impious and intolerable; and he was induced afterwards to abandon theſe offenſive ſentiments, and was again

is this to be wondered at, " For it is remarkable, " that the Socinians, in propagating their religious " principles, have always followed a quite different " method from that which has been obſerved by " other ſects. It has been the general practice of " ſectaries and innovators to endeavour to render " themſelves popular, and to begin by gaining the " multitude to their ſide; but the diſciples of So- " cinus, who are perpetually exalting the *dignity*, " *prerogatives, and authority of reaſon*, have this " peculiarity in their manner of proceeding, that " they are at very little pains to court the favour

again re-admitted into the community from which he had been excommunicated. How far theſe opinions are held by modern Socinians may be beſt gathered from the tenets of their intrepid champion: " If, Sir, you ſuppoſe that all the clergy of the " Church of England really believe that Jeſus Chriſt is a proper " object of prayer, and that he is to be adjured by *his holy* " *Nativity, &c.* with many other doctrines *equally abhorrent to* " *reaſon*, you are greatly miſtaken." See letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt, p. 31.—" I am endeavouring by all the " means in my power, to rouſe the attention of thinking " men in this country to the corrupt ſtate of religion that is eſta- " bliſhed in it; and eſpecially to convince them of this miſ- " chievous tendency of *worſhipping Chriſt* as God." Letters to Dr. Horſley, part 3d.—This ſeems to be the Budnæan doctrine in perfection, and is enough to raiſe the ſpirit of the *gentler* Socinus. Whether an expoſtulation would prevail with his diſciple to change his principles, or to abandon thoſe tenets, which are neither to be found in the Creed of Fauſtus, nor the Catechiſm of Cracow, may beſt be collected from the words of his zealous votary: " This is more than I would chuſe to ſay of my own " opinions. I may ſee reaſon to change them to-morrow." Importance of Free Enquiry, notes, p. 109.—1785.

" of the people, or to make proſelytes to their " cauſe among thoſe who are not diſtinguiſhed " from the multitude by their rank or their abili- " ties. It is only among the learned and the great " that they ſeek for diſciples and patrons with a " zealous aſſiduity *."

Agreeable to theſe principles, they inſtructed their diſciples, in their famous academy at Racow, in the rules of eloquence and rhetoric, and paid great attention to the ſubtilties of philoſophy and logic; by which means they invited the notice of men of birth and diſtinction, who, in this dawn of ſcience, were fond of patronizing perſons of education and talents, and who inſenſibly became members of their community. The like cauſes produced the like effects in this our country. When ſpeculative philoſophy had ſpread its influence amongſt us, and when we had ſet up the *lamp of reaſon*, as the only infallible guide to truth, the Unitarian principles could not fail of a favourable reception.—The ſeaſon I have pointed out; the ſucceſs let us next attend to.

Chriſtianity had, at the period under contemplation, many enemies to contend with; the nation had been overrun with ſcepticiſm and infidelity, and every ſenſe of religion ſeemed to be extinguiſhed in the minds of men. Atheiſm, indeed, began to droop, for the daring impieties of Hobbes and Spinoza had excited general diſguſt, and the public willingly received a refutation of the abſurd *denial*

* Moſheim's Eccleſ. Hiſt. by Maclane, vol. v. p. 52.

of

of the exiſtence and moral government of an all-powerful Being, even from the hands of Deiſm itſelf; which *ſcrupled only at the divine origin of the goſpel*, but promoted a religion which was to *be amenable to the dictates of natural reaſon*. Here was ample room for the Unitarian miſſionary; his fundamental maxim, "That all things that ſurpaſs the limits "of human comprehenſion, ſhould be entirely ba-"niſhed from the Chriſtian religion," could not fail of accommodating this *philoſophic age*. The harveſt truly was plenteous, the reapers were at hand, and the ſickle was thruſt in with no little ſucceſs *. To ſtop the progreſs of infidelity, the legiſlature interfered, and the 9th † and 10th ſtatutes of William III. came forth to prevent the total ſubverſion of religion and morality.

Having

* The reader who would wiſh to ſee an account of the Unitarian church, may conſult a candid and liberal publication of Mr. Lindſey, entitled, "An Hiſtorical View of the State of the "Unitarian Doctrine and Worſhip, from the Reformation to our "own Times." 1783.

† It is worthy notice, that this ſtatute ſeems to be pointed at thoſe who have apoſtatized from Chriſtianity: "If any perſon, "having been educated in, or at any time having made profeſſion "of the Chriſtian religion within this realm, ſhall, by writing, "printing, &c. deny any one of the perſons in the Holy Tri-"nity to be God, &c. or ſhall deny the Chriſtian religion to be "true, or the ſcriptures to be of divine authority, &c." And it ſeems to have a peculiar reſpect to thoſe who, having embraced Socinianiſm, by a very natural tranſition paſſed into Deiſm, and ended in downright Atheiſm. Such was the caſe of the unſettled Toland; his firſt ſtep was Socinianiſm, which appeared in his book,

Having thus brought forward the Unitarian to public notice, I ſhall leave him for a while, blended in the common maſs of Proteſtant Diſſenters, and reſume my ſubject. Perhaps I may have incurred ſome cenſure for this digreſſion, and been thought to have wandered from my original undertaking, which was, "to contraſt the late friendly profeſſions of the Diſſenters with their former political conduct." This cenſure might be applicable to a leſs deſultory publication; in the preſent caſe I claim indulgence under the ſanction of a celebrated critic. "Memoirs denote a compoſition, in which an author does not pretend to give full information of all the facts reſpecting the period of which he writes, but only to relate what he himſelf had acceſs to know, or what he was concerned in, or what illuſtrates the conduct

book, entitled, "Chriſtianity not myſterious," and from hence he proceeded gradually, through the medium theiſm, to the ſummit of infidelity.

It is this famous ſtatute that is the bugbear of Dr. Prieſtley: "Repeal the act of king William, which makes it blaſphemy "to impugn the doctrine of the Trinity. I think *it my duty* to "attempt the utter overthrow of this doctrine." Letter to Pitt, p. 24.—But let him calm his fears, if *he really has any*, and let him reſt quiet, as a ſocial being, as a citizen, and ſubject; and, I dare pledge myſelf, that he will not be dignified by perſecution or martyrdom. Church of England men are of the ſame metal with the Athenians of old, who condemned Socrates, not for ſaying, "*There is but one God*," but for his imprudently exciting a ſedition in order to overthrow the eſtabliſhed worſhip of his country. See Voltaire's Letters concerning the Engliſh Nation.

"of

" of ſome perſon, or the circumſtances of ſome " tranſaction, which he chuſes for his ſubject. " From a writer of Memoirs, therefore, is not ex- " pected the ſame profound reſearch, or enlarged " information, as from a writer of Hiſtory. He is " not ſubject to the ſame laws of unvarying dig- " nity and gravity. He may talk freely of him- " ſelf: he may deſcend into the moſt familiar anec- " dotes *."

By the ſeveral acts of parliament which had previouſly eſtabliſhed the Proteſtant ſucceſſion in the houſe of Hanover, George I. found an eaſy and peaceable acceſſion to the throne †. The Proteſtant Diſſenters having felt the benefits of Toleration, and ſenſible of the bleſſings of a mild adminiſtration, dreaded, in common with their fellow-ſubjects, an interference of papal policy, and re-intro-

* Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric, &c. vol. iii. p. 52.

† In 1714.—The Diſſenters are fond of charging the clergy of the Eſtabliſhment with diſaffection to the Proteſtant ſucceſſion in the houſe of Brunſwick. When the convention of eſtates, at the revolution, declared the throne to be vacant, and that the next Proteſtant heirs of the blood royal of Charles I. ſhould fill the vacant throne, in the old order of ſucceſſion, it has never been denied that many of the clergy, together with a great number of the people, from a regard to the antient line, looked with coolneſs on the temporary exception, or preference to the perſon of king William the third; and this unlucky prejudice was kept alive in the ſucceeding reigns by the contending intereſts of two powerful factions, to the great reputation, it ſeems, of the Diſſenters of the preſent times!

duction

duction of arbitrary government. Accordingly, at a critical juncture *, when the tranquillity of the kingdom was interrupted by the hoſtile attempts of the pretender, their gratitude united with their ſelf-intereſt in oppoſing the common enemy; and their allegiance was not long after rewarded by the removal of thoſe reſtrictions which their political interference had brought upon them in the preceding reign †.

The reins of government devolved on George II. at a period equally propitious to the monarch and the ſubject ‡. The odious jealouſies which had ſubſiſted in the former reigns began to ſubſide, and commerce, the idol of the nation, flowed naturally

* In the rebellion in 1715.

† The Occaſional conformity and Schiſm Acts were repealed in 1718.

‡ In 1727.—When the death of George the firſt was made known, a council was aſſembled at Leiceſter-houſe, where his majeſty made a declaration, in which was the following expreſſion: "*The religion, laws, and liberties* of the kingdom are moſt dear "to me: and the *preſervation* of the conſtitution in church and "ſtate, as *it is now happily eſtabliſhed*, ſhall be my firſt and al-"ways my chief care."

It has been often aſſerted by the advocates of the Diſſenters, that the princes of the houſe of Hanover have been always zealous for the repeal of the Teſts. The ſagacious author of the Confeſſional roundly affirms, that the "attempts which were "made in the reigns of George I. and George II. *to repeal the* "*Teſts*, did not miſcarry for want of the *hearty concurrence of the* "*princes on the throne.*" Pref. to the Confeſſional, p. 50.—And the ingenious Aſſerter of the Rights of the Proteſtant Diſſenters inſinuates,

turally through all her channels. Civil liberty, and the rights of mankind, were now clearly underſtood, and national proſperity promiſed a laſting duration. The declaration to maintain the conſtitution as eſtabliſhed by law, which the king made at the commencement of his reign, prepoſſeſſed his ſubjects in his favour, and was a pledge of his future intentions to protect the eſtabliſhment, and to ſecure the ſubject in the exerciſe of his civil and religious freedom. The political ferments that afterwards diſturbed this reign were not a little increaſed by the irregular conduct and unexpected claims of the Proteſtant Diſſenters.

We have ſeen them grateful for the bleſſings of a free Toleration, and, mindful only of their ſpiritual concerns, making no attempts to overleap thoſe barriers, or to demoliſh thoſe fences, which the wiſdom and policy of their forefathers had peaceably acquieſced in. Some malcontents, in a populous commercial town, firſt diſcovered the imperfection of the ſtate machine, and, zealous, no doubt,

inſinuates, that the *private* ſentiments of Sir Robert Walpole, though he oppoſed the motion for the repeal, which was brought into the houſe by Mr. Walter Plummer, in 1736, were favourable to the application. The direct contrary of this is the fact: Sir Robert Walpole, together with that moſt independent of men, Mr. Shippen, oppoſed the motion ſtrenuouſly, upon theſe very grounds: "That a repeal of thoſe clauſes in the Teſt Act, which "require thoſe who are admitted into offices to take the Sacra-"ment, would be *extremely dangerous to the eſtabliſhed church.* See Rights of the Prot. Diſſ. aſſerted, p. 29.

for

for the *ſalus reipublicæ*, and *the rights of their fellow-citizens*, undertook to infuſe new health and new vigour into the diſeaſed conſtitution *; or,

" Bluſhing that the world went well, had rather,
" Though they themſelves did ſuffer by it, beheld
" Diſſentious numbers peſt'ring ſtreets, than ſee
" Their tradeſmen ſinging in their ſhops, and going
" About their functions friendly." CORIOLANUS.

The object of theſe ſtate phyſicians was to remove the ſacramental teſts; and they drew this

* " In 1731 the Diſſenters of Liverpool determined to ap-
" ply to the legiſlature for relief. That they might have the
" greater chance of ſucceſs, they propoſed a general application
" of the Diſſenters when the *parliament ſhould be drawing to a*
" *cloſe*; and hoped that, to ſecure their influence at the approach-
" ing general election, the miniſter might be induced to hazard
" ſomething in their favour.—In many counties and towns they
" entered into engagements mutually to ſupport, as candidates,
" *the friends of civil and religious liberty, and the houſe of Han-*
" *over.*" See Rights of Prot. Diſſ. aſſerted, p. 28.

About this time the Diſſenters in Ireland attempted to obtain a repeal of the Teſt Act. Theſe men often affected to call themſelves brother Proteſtants and fellow Chriſtians with the members of the eſtabliſhed church. Upon this occaſion Dean Swift wrote a ſhort copy of verſes, which ſo provoked one Betteſworth, a lawyer, and member of the Iriſh eſtabliſhment, that he ſwore, in the hearing of many perſons, to revenge himſelf either by murdering or maiming the Dean. And for this purpoſe he engaged ſome ruffians to aſſault him, wherever they could find him. This lawleſs attempt rouſed the nobility and gentry of the liberty of St. Patrick's, who, in a body, waited on the Dean, and preſented a paper ſubſcribed with their names, in which they ſolemnly engaged to defend his perſon and fortune, as the friend and benefactor of his country, againſt the inſults of this furious Diſſenter. See Biog. Dict. article Swift.

patriotic

patriotic inference, which their deſcendants probably will never forget, that when the obnoxious clauſes in the Teſt Act were done away, their diſtreſſed country, would be no longer deprived of their political abilities. To aid the ſcheme of reformation, the Quaker caught the ſpirit of faction, and joining the patriots, preferred, about the ſame time, his *humble petition* for a relief from the *payment of tythes, church rates, and all other eccleſiaſtical dues* *.

The ferment which theſe unconſtitutional claims † had occaſioned greatly diſconcerted the reigning prince,

* The Diſſenters did not find *a fit time* to bring forward their motion for a repeal of the Teſt Act till 1736, when it was loſt by a majority of 251 againſt 123. Another effort was made in 1739, but this was quaſhed by a ſtill greater proportionate majority, viz. 188 to 89. The Quakers met with better ſucceſs; the bill that was brought in for their relief, after much altercation paſſed the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords; however,

" Both parties join'd to do their beſt,
" To damn the public intereſt;
" To try at both ends of the ſaw,
" And tear down government and law."

HUDIB. Cant. 3.

The eſtabliſhed church was at this time greatly indebted to the ſervices of Dr. Gibſon, biſhop of London, who, by timely apprizing the clergy of the bold ſcheme of the Quakers, to deprive them of their legal maintenance by tithes, and by animating his brethren on the bench to concur with him, averted a ſerious blow, that was aimed at religion, and the rights and properties of the clergy.

† I maintain that their claims are *unconſtitutional*, however the term may be combated by ſophiſtry. If the anceſtors of the Diſſenters

prince, who, about this time, intending to viſit his German dominions, and dreading the conſequences of ſuch internal conteſts, cloſed the ſeſſion of 1736 with this paternal admonition. "He expreſſed "great concern at ſeeing ſuch ſeeds of diſſenſion "ſown among his people: He declared it was his "deſire, and ſhould ever be his care, to preſerve "the preſent conſtitution in church and ſtate as "by law eſtabliſhed: and recommended a ſpirit "of harmony and concord among all the Proteſ-"tants of the nation, as the *chief ſupport of the happy "Eſtabliſhment.*"

I forbear commenting on this authentic document, and ſhall only remark that it completely refutes thoſe aſſertions of the Proteſtant Diſſenters, "That their principles have been uniformly friend-"ly to the Eſtabliſhment." Had they been ſo even at this period, they would not have received this ſort of counſel from a prince, the avowed friend to religious toleration. A compleat defeat which the cauſe of the Proteſtant Diſſenters ſuſtained in a ſecond effort to obtain their unconſtitutional demands, in 1739, ſilenced their clamours, and we hear little or nothing of imaginary grievances for the remainder of this reign.

Diſſenters did aſſiſt in the contrivance and ſettlement of that ſcheme of government, generally underſtood by the Britiſh Conſtitution, and helped to eſtabliſh *or confirm* certain Teſts, as neceſſary to the preſervation of it, (a circumſtance eaſily proved) every attempt to overthow thoſe eſſential principles, on which ſuch ſettlement is founded, may fairly be deemed unconſtitutional.

Having

Having brought thoſe tranſactions of the Proteſtant Diſſenters, which relate to their ſuppoſed attachment to the Eſtabliſhment of this country, down to our own times, I ſhall make a momentary pauſe, in order to appriſe my reader, that I have not ſelected theſe hiſtorical remarks, with a view to cloud his judgment, or to inflame his reſentments againſt the Diſſenters as ſuch. I am as averſe as any man, from drawing unfavourable concluſions of the principles of a party, from the opinions, or *even the actions of a few* of that party, much leſs from the ſuſpicions of their adverſaries. But when I ſee their *Reſolutions*, their Pamphlets, and popular declamations ſwelled out with oſtentatious references to former loyalty and attachment; when I am told by their celebrated orator *, "That the law conſiders no man's opinion to be "injurious, until ſuch opinion be brought *into* "*action*;" and am inſtructed by their literary champion †, "to judge of principles, as our Sa-"viour teaches us to judge of men, *by their ac-*"*tions*," however unwilling I may be to recur to periods, when a narrow and contracted policy governed the actions of mankind, yet, when I ſee the whole collected body of the Diſſenters preſſing forward for the removal of the antient Teſts of the conſtitution, under the colourable pretext of political merit, it becomes, in juſtice to their own poſi-

* See Mr. Fox's ſpeech in the houſe of Commons, March 3, 1790.

† Importance of Free Enquiry, p. 106.

tion, and in compliance with their own doctrine, a neceſſary although an invidious taſk, to appeal to the page of hiſtory for an eſtimate of Diſſenting-principles. In the proſecution of this enquiry, it will appear to the impartial reader, that my facts are, for the moſt part, collected from authors the declared friends to toleration; and the reſult of the argument is, that the merit ſo arrogantly aſſumed, is to be reſolved into a ſelf-intereſted principle, a ſelf-intereſt in maintaining a government, which extends to all its ſubjects equal ſecurity and protection.

Civil government is an inſtitution in which we are all confederated for mutual ſafety and defence, and the intereſts of the community indiſpenſably require the *active* exertions of *every individual*, however differing in religious ſentiments, when the general ſafety is at ſtake. But, as the religious intereſts of the Proteſtant Diſſenters are interwoven with the eſtabliſhment of the Church of England, their indifference at the time when the latter was threatened with the hoſtilities of a foreign enemy, and with the revival of papal intolerance, would have hazarded their own cauſe; and their neutrality would have been a political crime of great magnitude.

Senſible and conſiderate men will ſee through this ſophiſtry, and be tempted to conclude, that a ſelf-intereſted attachment has been the chief foundation of Diſſenting patriotiſm!

We are now entering upon a period of our hiſtory, dear to every lover of his country; a period that poſterity will envy us the enjoyment of, and which the children that are yet unborn will contemplate with fond veneration and regard. Our beloved monarch George III. aſcended the throne, amidſt the acclamations of a proſperous and happy people: the early ſpecimen * which he gave of his ſerious determination to promote religion and virtue, and to preſerve and ſtrengthen the conſtitution both in church and ſtate †, promiſed an augmentation of ſocial happineſs, and the maintenance of political privileges; and an undeviating attention to theſe original profeſſions has marked the progreſs of this illuſtrious reign. Acts of indemnity and indulgence to the Diſſenters followed theſe favourable appearances, and we find them at this time truly ſenſible of a mild and beneficent adminiſtration ‡.

* See the proclamation for the encouragement of piety and virtue, iſſued in 1760.

† Addreſs to the council aſſembled at Carlton-houſe. State Papers.

‡ The Diſſenters, in expectation of the fullneſs of their wiſhes, affect to ſcout the very idea of an indemnity act. Strange perverſeneſs! was it not for theſe remittances, their clamours would be louder, and with greater degree of reaſon. Neither do they attribute the indulgences and the tranquillity they enjoyed at this period to political influence, but to an unnatural ſenſation: "Our gracious monarch George III. aſcended "the throne in 1760, and from that time *an unaccountable torpor* "*has ſeized the Diſſenters.*" Right of Proteſtant Diſſenters aſſerted, ſect. 7.

The ſtrange attempt that had been made in the preceding reign, to obtain a repeal of the Teſt-laws, though at that time alarming, contributed eventually to this general harmony. The arguments that were then adduced by Sherlock, Warburton, Gibſon, and others, had ſo completely evinced the neceſſity of preſerving certain Teſts, as bulwarks of the conſtitution, that the opinions of men were well made up upon the ſubject; and the determined reſolution of adminiſtration to defend the Eſtabliſhment upon this principle, together with the decided majorities in the legiſlature againſt theſe unconſtitutional demands, warranted an expectation that the ſubject would not be revived, as long at leaſt as the memory of the tranſaction ſhould remain. Accordingly we find half a century lapſe in the tranquil enjoyment of religious privilege.

A dread of the fatal conſequences of inteſtine feuds, and a juſt abhorrence of perſecution for conſcience ſake, contributed, with the encreaſing ſpirit of Toleration, to ſuppreſs former animoſities and diſaffection. The old narrowneſs of ſuperſtitious policy, had ſhrunk before the milder influence of lenity, and mutual forbearance: and churchmen now freely acknowledged, that the tenets of Chriſtianity, and the doctrines of their own Eſtabliſhment, contained the ſtrongeſt arguments for toleration; that humanity and benevolence, ſo forcibly enjoined by each, could not conſiſt with an arbitrary compulſion into eſtabliſhed forms of worſhip;

and

and that the intercourſe betwixt God, and a man's own conſcience ſhould be free and uncontrouled.

In times ſo favourable to religious liberty, it was natural for Diſſenters to preſs forward for the fullneſs of indulgence, and the removal of all reſtrictions; and in the progreſs of this reign we find them petitioning for, and obtaining an extenſion of privilege, and an avowed completion of their wiſhes. In 1777 certain diſabilities, under which the miniſters of the Proteſtant Diſſenters laboured, were removed, and ſo ſenſible were they of the favour and relief granted them in this inſtance, that a leading and truly reſpectable character* amongſt them

* Dr. Kippis, ſee his letter.—In the debate on Mr. Fox's motion, March 3d, 1790, Mr. Pitt with great ſucceſs preſſed this argument on the houſe, contending, "that, as the Proteſ-"tant Diſſenters had, at the time this relief was granted to "them, declared in the moſt public manner, that they had no-"thing more to aſk of the legiſlature, and were now, in direct "contradiction, urging additional demands on Parliament—it "was impoſſible to judge how far they meant to proceed, or "what would in fact content them." Yet this fair reaſoning was parried with ſingular addreſs by Mr. Beaufoy: he allowed that at the time alluded to, the Diſſenters were ſatisfied, and expreſſed themſelves ſo; but then, as thoſe indulgences affected them *as miniſters*, they were not precluded coming forward in the preſent inſtance *as men!* Such equivocation is neither candid, nor indeed politic. And as the Diſſenters have already urged the juſtice of their being exonerated of eccleſiaſtical fees, in order to transfer them to their own miniſtry, it is reaſonable to expect, from this inſtance of mental reſervation, that they will in time come forward for a legal eſtabliſhment to ſecure to their clergy this voluntary tribute.

declared, "That they had now no additional claims to urge, and that their toleration was complete *.

The approved clemency of the monarch, and the mildneſs of an enlightened age, encouraged another deſcription of Diſſenters, equally well affected to the civil conſtitution of this country, to ſolicit a remiſſion of their grievances, and an abatement of real perſecution; and ſuch was the ſucceſs of the modeſt and reaſonable petition of the Roman Catholics, that in 1778 they obtained, without oppoſition, a repeal of the 11th and 12th of William III. which, however neceſſary at the time of enacting, were now underſtood to be a diſgrace to the ſtatute book, and an offence to the feelings of a poliſhed nation †.

Theſe

* The redreſs ſo readily granted to the miniſters of the Proteſtant Diſſenters was but ill requited by one of their reverend body. A celebrated Unitarian, of revolution principles, added not a little to the calamities that diſtracted the kingdom about this time; his numerous inflammatory publications fomented the American revolt, and contributed in no ſmall degree to the diſmemberment of the empire. Whatever unforeſeen advantages the nation may have received from this revolution, and they are not a few, the houſe of Brunſwick will hardly thank this political Diſſenter for his loyalty and allegiance.

† The penalties which were now repealed went to the puniſhment of Popiſh biſhops and prieſts for officiating in the ſervice of their church: the impriſoning Papiſts who kept ſchools, or educated and boarded youth: and the diſabling Papiſts to inherit lands.

The Roman Catholics are ſtill under great diſabilities and penalties, by many acts paſſed from the 23d Eliz. to 11th of George

Theſe relaxations and abatements, originating in juſtice, and founded in policy, produced an occurrence as unexpected as it was atrocious. The outrages committed in 1780, by bands of deſperate and deſigning men, under pretence of defending

George II. They are prohibited from teaching ſchools unleſs licenſed by the ordinary. They cannot preſent to any advowſon. If they ſay maſs the fine is 200 marks, if they hear it 100 marks, and each ſuffers one year's impriſonment. They can hold no office nor employment. They muſt not keep arms, nor come within ten miles of London, on pain of 100 pounds. They can bring no action at law, nor ſuit in equity. If they travel five miles from home they forfeit all their goods. If they come to court they forfeit 100 pounds. If they ſend any perſon abroad to be educated in the Popiſh religion, or contribute towards it, the ſender, the ſent, and the contributor are diſabled to ſue in law or equity, to take any legacy, to bear any office, and forfeit all their goods and chattels, and all their real eſtate for life. If a Proteſtant becomes a convert to popery, or procures others to be ſo, the offence is high treaſon. Theſe are real penalties and diſabilities! penalties worth petitioning a remiſſion of! and not a tittle of theſe affect the Proteſtant Diſſenters. And yet how different is the conduct of the parties as citizens and ſubjects! From the Proteſtant Diſſenters we hear nothing elſe but clamour and diſſatisfaction, complaints of oppreſſion and perſecution, of fancied pains and imaginary grievances. Whilſt the Roman Catholic appears contented under this heavy catalogue of penalties. Nay he is grateful for the clemency ſhewn him by an enlightened people, and even applauds that eſtabliſhment which the Proteſtant Diſſenter ſo inceſſantly reprobates. "Let us then remain as we are; for a bet-
"ter eſtabliſhment, as I have ſaid, more conſonant with the
"rights of the people, and the prerogative of the crown, Eng-
"land can never enjoy." Such are the ſentiments of a very eminent Catholic, in pleading the cauſe and intereſts of Diſſenters! See Berrington on the Rights of the Diſſenters.

not so in 1826.

the Proteſtant religion from the encroachments of Popery, excited the horror and indignation of mankind. I would not revive the memory of theſe exceſſes, if they had not a very cloſe relation to the ſubject under diſcuſſion.

I am aware that the Proteſtant Diſſenters will deny their being the authors of this horrible inſurrection; and that their *principles*, in the preſent times, could not lead them to commit ſuch atrocious *actions:* the latter part of this poſition reſts with me to prove; what their *principles* were at this time may be fairly collected from a ſtatement of them by a candid and impartial *Diſſenting Miniſter*. "The diligent and impartial inquirer, "however candid, muſt acknowledge that the "Proteſtant Diſſenters, in leſs time than even half "a century paſt, were in general auſtere in their "temper and manners; that they painted religion "with a gloomy aſpect; betrayed a ſpirit of ſin-"gularity and oppoſition in trifles; were exceſ-"ſive, and almoſt indiſcriminate, in their invec-"tives againſt pleaſure; laid too much ſtreſs "upon modes and opinions; made too little al-"lowance for human infirmities; fixed too high a "value on long and frequent retirements for the "ſake of devotional exerciſes in private; placed "as much too low the ſtandard of the *moral vir-"tues*, thoſe eſpecially which are *humane*, *generous*, "and of all others the moſt engaging: confined "almoſt all their approbation and good-will to "*the people of their own ſect*; diſcovered an over-"weening

" weening conceit of their own ſpiritual attain-
" ments; and—what is ſtill worſe than all the reſt!
" —that there were undoubtedly inſtances of thoſe
" who put on the ſemblance of rigorous piety to
" atone for, conceal, and give ſucceſs to heinous
" immorality.—It is with all readineſs acknow-
" ledged, that there are upon record many ex-
" ceptions to this heavy charge; but the above-
" mentioned may, I think, be exhibited as ſome
" of the principal outlines in the character of thoſe
" who were, or affected to be, amongſt the beſt
" and religious perſons of the laſt age. Nay,
" further, if a diligent and impartial inquiry *were*
" *now made* (viz. 1780) into *the prevailing temper*
" *of large bodies of Proteſtant Diſſenters*, in ſeveral
" different parts of this kingdom, it would be
" found, that ſomething of *the ſame ſpirit is ſtill*
" *amongſt us* *."—Such are the *principles* of Pro-
teſtant Diſſenters, delineated in a fair, impartial
manner, by their own hands!

But I am far from imputing the fatal conſe-
quences of this terrible outrage ſolely to the Diſ-
ſenters. I am ſenſible too, that many eminent
characters amongſt them were conſulted upon the
repeal of the 11th and 12th of William, and were
zealous in the cauſe of religious freedom, promot-
ing the indulgence which the Catholics at this
time received. But, whilſt juſtice is due to this
deſcription of men for their candour and mode-

* See a Diſcourſe on religious Zeal, by Mr. Rd. Godwin, 1780—bound up with two other Diſcourſes.

ration,

ration, I cannot ſuppreſs my abhorrence of that tumultuous aſſociation of Proteſtant Diſſenters, which, under the ſpecious maſk of patriotiſm and religion, firſt promoted an inſurrection that ſubverted the civil authority, and introduced a ſcene of riot and diſorder, that filled the empire with amazement and conſternation.

Whatever * the real deſign of theſe infatuated men might be, the meaſures which they adopted to promote their cauſe were, in the leading features, ſo ſimilar to the late attempt of the Proteſtant Diſſenters to obtain a redreſs of their imaginary grievances, that I cannot in this place overlook the ſtriking reſemblance.

In

* Although the whole charge of theſe evils is not imputable to the Diſſenters, yet the original and chief cauſe of the inſurrection reſts with them. It is a fact, that, ſo early as 1779, the infatuated leader of the rioters (lord George Gordon) maintained a correſpondence with ſome diſaffected teachers in Edinburgh and Dumfries, upon the ſubject of the Catholic Bill, and particularly with the preſident of a formidable body at Glaſgow, called *The eighty-five Societies*, with whoſe agents this unhappy man was, in the following year, more cloſely connected, when he headed the Scotch diviſion of inſurgents in St. George's Fields, and proceeded with them in a tumultuous manner to Palace Yard, in order to intimidate the legiſlature into a compliance with their wiſhes, which then appeared to be a repeal of an act paſſed in 1778, diſannulling the obnoxious clauſes in the 11th and 12th of William, and admitting their fellow-ſubjects to ſome immunities. Beſides the petition of the Proteſtant Aſſociators, there were others, from various parts of the kingdom, preſented by lord George Gordon, on behalf of the Diſſenters, at the bar of the houſe of commons. An adherent

of

In 1780 the leaders of the inſurrection, as a previous ſtep, invited the notice of the public by circulating pamphlets, hand-bills, and public advertiſements *, " exhorting the *true friends* of " Great Britain to unite, before it be too late, in " *vindication of civil and religious liberty.*" — In 1789 a ſimilar ſtep was taken by the Proteſtant Diſſenters, previous to the diſcuſſion of their cauſe, and, at ſome of their meetings, they ſeriouſly reſolved " to raiſe a fund to defray the expences of " publiſhing *ſmall pieces in vindication of liberty* †."

Charity forbids my imputing to the firſt aſſociators an intention of kindling a flame of ſuch horror

of this gentleman's, and with whom he at that time lodged, was very roughly handled by Mr. Burke, in the debate on the petitions againſt the Catholic Bill, 20th June, 1780. He attacked this gentleman (alderman Bull) with great ſeverity " for the " part *he had acted in the late diſturbances*, and for his ſupport- " ing the petitions againſt the Catholics." He aſked, " How " ſuch a man as he, enjoying as *a Proteſtant Diſſenter all the* " *bleſſings of religious Toleration*, could reconcile it to his con- " ſcience to deny ſome few comforts to other men, between " whom and him there was no difference but the mere diffe- " rence of religious opinion ?"—From theſe and a multitude of other reaſons we may fairly conclude, that the riots of 1780 were promoted and conducted by Proteſtant Diſſenters.

* See the various advertiſements of the Proteſtant Aſſociators, in the periodical papers of 1780.

† From amongſt others of the ſame import, I ſelect the following reſolution of the meeting of Proteſtant Diſſenters at Bolton in Lancaſhire, 17th of December, 1789: " That, as " nothing can be *more beneficial to a good cauſe* than promoting " a knowledge of its merits, it be recommended to the Aſſembly " of

ror and devaſtation from ſo ſmall a ſpark; or to the ſecond a *preſentiment* of the conſequences of their injudicious publications. In the firſt caſe, indeed, the invaders of the public peace witneſſed the miſchief which their inflammatory notices had excited, and attempted, when too late, to retrieve the unhappy ſtep they had taken *: from the latter *prelude to ſedition*, we have hitherto experienced no evil conſequences.

If

" of Delegates for this diſtrict, to endeavour to raiſe a fund from " among the congregations which they repreſent, to defray the " expence of publiſhing *ſmall pieces in vindication of liberty*, and " the rights of the Diſſenters."—And, in conſequence of theſe reſolutions, *ſmall pieces*, of a *peculiar tendency*, were publiſhed in February 1790, and advertiſed *for circulation* at 5 *s.* per hundred.

* The Proteſtant Diſſenters in 1780, finding that it was eaſier to aſſemble than to appeaſe a mob by hand-bills, thought proper, when their partizans were proceeding to outrageous lengths, to publiſh counter-notices, diſſuading the inſurgents from their exceſſes; and, in fact, diſavowing all connection with them if they proceeded further. And their unhappy leader attempted, at his examination before the privy council, to exculpate himſelf by ſaying, that " he could not *foreſee* the miſchief " that had enſued." Yet here was ſome apparent contrition, ſome palliation of the offence; and however ſlight, the moſt favourable conſtruction was put upon it. But the Proteſtant Diſſenters of 1790, although admoniſhed by ſome of their moderate and rational brethren not to proceed to ſuch unjuſtifiable lengths as their reſolutions held forth, in contempt of the friendly admonition, plainly intimated, that their firſt exertions, their *ſmall pieces in vindication of liberty*, were only a prelude to nobler atchievements. This appeared clearly from a letter which Mr. Burke produced in the houſe of commons, March 3d, 1790, in the

If I ſhould be thought to have uſed, on this occaſion, an expreſſion too harſh, let it be remembered that allegiance to the ſtate may be broken by other means than by open acts of rebellion: the circulating ſmall publications, calculated to inſpire the people with diſaffection to the exiſting laws and government, however cautiouſly worded, may very fairly be deemed a *prelude to ſedition*; for the guilt of popular inſurrection conſiſts as much in any act promotive of the tumult, as in the real injury done to the community: and this ſpecies of libel, as it inflames the paſſions, is generally productive of diſorder. In the firſt inſtance, we have ſeen it lead a deluded mob to the deſtruction of the lives and properties of their fel-

the debate on Mr. Fox's motion: this letter he declared he had received but the day before, from a Mr. Fletcher, a Diſſenter in Lancaſhire; in which he ſtated, "that the meeting of Pro-"teſtant Diſſenters held at Bolton avowed ſuch violent prin-"ciples, that he would not ſtay, but came away with ſome other "moderate men." He obſerved, that one member being aſked, "What was their object, and whether they meant to ſeek "for any thing more than the repeal of the Corporation and "Teſt Acts?" anſwered, in the language of our Saviour, "We "know thoſe things which ye are not yet able to bear." And when another member ſaid, "Give them a little light into "what we intend," he informed him, that "they did not care "the nip of a ſtraw for the repeal of thoſe Acts; but that they "deſigned to try for the abolition of the Tythes, Liturgy, &c." To this unſhaken Abdiel regard is due;

> His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
> Nor number, nor example with him wrought
> To ſwerve from truth. MILTON.

low

low citizens: in the latter caſe, although the meaſure has been hitherto attended with no miſchief, there is an overt-act againſt the public ſafety; for, by weakening the judgment, and inflaming the imagination, *theſe ſmall pieces in vindication of liberty* are calculated to promote popular commotion, and to introduce diſaffection and ſedition amongſt the multitude:

Hac fonte derivata clades,
In patriam populumque fluxit.

This ſpecious artifice, which has been adopted by the aſſociators in both inſtances, in order to cover their deſigns, and to carry their ſeparate ſchemes into execution, is calculated to lull oppoſition aſleep, and it may, for a while, impoſe upon the credulous. Thus, the inſurgents in 1780 diſplayed the mock banners of religion and liberty, and numbers unwarily enliſted at the ſtandard, unconſcious of any intended evil: and the aſſociators of the preſent times, copying the ſucceſsful precedent, are the *declared aſſerters of the rights of men*, and the *avengers of their oppreſſed and perſecuted fellow citizens*; and, improving on the model, they congratulate one another upon the daily incenſe offered at the ſhrine of Diſſenting-Virtue: "We have received, with heart-felt ſatisfaction, "the teſtimonies of approbation with which our "conduct has been honoured *," &c. This tinſel

* See the Reſolutions of a Meeting of the Committee, &c. held at the King's Head Tavern, Poultry, London, January 13th, 1790; Edward Jefferies, Eſq; Chairman.

dreſs

dreſs of *fancied* approbation has been put on to dazzle the underſtanding, and to confound the judgment, that the projected reformation of the ſtate might not be expoſed to ſcrutiny and defeat; and, as the deſign is of a deeper policy, a garb more tawdry and meretricious than uſual was judged neceſſary;

> Leſt an apprehenſion
> Should turn the tide of fearful faction,
> And breed a kind of queſtion in their cauſe:
> For well they know, they of the offending ſide
> Muſt keep aloof from ſtrict arbitrement,
> And ſtop all ſight-holes, every loop, from whence
> The eye of reaſon may pry in upon them *.

It muſt be allowed then that theſe modern vindicators of liberty have arrayed themſelves more gorgeouſly than their predeceſſors; but with ſingular negligence, whilſt buſied in attiring the frontiſpiece of faction, they have ludicrouſly expoſed its nakedneſs in a leſs guarded quarter.

The indignation which, from *purity of conſcience*, they have expreſſed againſt the impious policy of their country, in perverting ſacred ordinances to civil purpoſes, muſt claim our *holy veneration*; on this popular ſubject their apologiſts are peculiarly eloquent: but, with inimitable aſſurance, they brand churchmen for their indelicacy in confounding religion with politics, at the very time that they are moulding their own miniſters into vehicles

* Shakeſpear's Henry IV.

of

of faction, and proſtituting the ſanctity of their tabernacles to ſecular intrigue.

The Proteſtant Diſſenters aſſembled at Warrington, after noticing the "*partiality*, *oppreſſion*, and *injuſtice* of the Teſt laws, and commenting on the "*injuries* that their country ſuffers by the excluſion "of able and virtuous Diſſenters from civil offices, "declare, that they *cannot reſt ſatisfied* whilſt ſo "groſs a *violation of the rights of men* remains on "our ſtatute books: they therefore exhort their "brethren, *as good citizens*, *to do all they can* to remove an obſtacle which prevents the admiſſion "of *honeſt Diſſenters* into public employments." And to impreſs theſe *honeſt* principles on the minds of the multitude, and excite their zeal for novelty, and laudable endeavours after reformation, they reſolved, "That copies of theſe reſolutions be ſent "to the miniſters of the ſeveral congregations "which are repreſented by their delegates in this "meeting, accompanied with a requeſt, *that they* "*will publicly read them to their reſpective congregations* *."

Thus would they waken the ſpiritual repoſe of the low-roofed meeting-houſe into an appetence of temporalities, into a ſcramble for the perquiſites of tide-waiting, and the lucre of an exciſe office †.

"Theſe

* See the reſolutions of a meeting of delegates from eight congregations of Proteſtant Diſſenters, held at Warrington, January 6th, 1790.

† Perſons of all ranks and degrees in the ſtate, from the gauge

" Theſe things, indeed, they have articulated,
" Proclaimed at market croſſes, read in churches,
" To face the garment of rebellion
" With ſome fair colour, that may pleaſe the eye
" Of fickle changelings, and poor diſcontents,
" Which gape and rub the elbow at the news
" Of hurly-burly innovation."

It will appear, upon further examination, that the pulpit has been, of late, the common vehicle of fanatical diſcontent. A ſpirit of prejudice againſt eſtabliſhed laws, and an irreverence of government, has been induſtriouſly imparted, and the oratory has furniſhed out the fuel and materials of ſedition.

An illuſtrious writer, whoſe ſkill in all the offices of civil life has not been equalled, points out to us the origin and progreſs of popular diſcontent. Sir Francis Bacon, treating of the cauſe and miſchief of ſeditious inſurrection, obſerves, that it originates in the murmurs and averſion of two parties, the higher orders in the ſtate, and the commonalty: " When one of theſe is diſcontent, the danger is " not great; for common people are of ſlow mo- " tion, if they be not excited by the greater ſort: " and the greater ſort are of ſmall ſtrength, except " the multitude be apt and ready to move of them- " ſelves. Then this is the danger, when the better " ſort *do but wait for the troubling of the waters*

gauge to the ſceptre, are alike excluded from executive offices, except they receive the Sacrament according to the rites of the church of England.

"*amongſt the meaner*, that then they may declare "themſelves *."

It would be a very eaſy, although a tedious taſk, to point out paſſages and proofs from the ſermons of ſeveral of the Diſſenting miniſters, of their attempts to inſtil into their reſpective audiences a diſtaſte of all ordinances, civil and religious. The conventicle has reſounded with ideal tyranny, and fanatic reformation, and the preſs has teemed with fables of iron-handed perſecution, and with predictions of a golden age of liberty. Trope has followed trope, and metaphor urged on metaphor, to animate the eaſy, inglorious ſectary to deeds of pious anarchy; the Teſts, the Church, the Supremacy are no humble objects; and when Kings, Laws, and Biſhops are the promiſed plunder, what *friend to Liberty* would tamely reſt in the *weak piping time of peace?*

Hinc concuſſa *fides*, et multis utile bellum.

How far their doctrine has ſpread contagion within the limits of the meeting-houſe, I am unwilling to enquire; but if their religio-political directory has been as favourably received without, which they inſinuate, as it has been fervidly enforced within the pale of diſſenſion; it is high time ſome antidote ſhould be adminiſtered to correct the malignant influence. This they have abundantly furniſhed; for a naked exhibition of

* Sir F. Bacon's Eſſays.

the

the real principles of this *goſpel-preaching miniſtry*, ſtripped of their borrowed frippery, will be ſufficient to convince their deluded followers, that " though their voice be Jacob's voice, yet their " hands are the hands of Eſau."

It would be waſting too much of my time, and it would weary the patience of my reader, was I to quote the multitude of inflammatory and libellous publications, which have iſſued from the overheated brains of thoſe uſurping ſons of Levi, who *have of late taken ſo much upon them, murmuring alike againſt the prieſthood, and the rulers of the people.* I ſhall only notice the zealous deeds of two, who are leaders *in the aſſembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:* Who, in fomenting ſchiſm in the church, and diſſenſion in the ſtate, have miſapplied talents, that would have adorned ſociety, and might have rendered real ſervices to mankind.

Theſe holy champions of revolt,

——— " whoſe virtues would be proud
" If their faults whipp'd them not: and whoſe crimes
" Would deſpair, if they were not cheriſhed by their virtues:

Theſe reverend abettors of ſedition, are not content to *wait for the troubling of the waters*, but improvidently agitate the fearful element; and, inſtead of inſpiring their people with the ſpirit of truth, unity, and concord, they have mingled the perverſe ſpirit of diſcord and diſſenſion, with the ſpirit of promiſe and the ſpirit of prophecy. " What " we are aiming at is to *enlighten the minds of the*

" *people*, and to ſhew them that, in the Church " Eſtabliſhment of this country, there is much of " error and ſuperſtition: and if we can convince " them that it is ſo (and of this I have no doubt) " in proper time *they will take it down themſelves.*" See Letter to the Right honourable William Pitt, 1787, by Joſ. Prieſtley, LL. D.

" The enemies of reformation do not ſuffici- " ently conſider, that, by oppoſing, in enlightened " times, all attempts to remove ſuch *ſhocking ble-* " *miſhes* from our eſtabliſhed code of faith and " worſhip, they expoſe the hierarchy to particular " danger of a *ſudden and total overthrow.* As a " friend to the free progreſs of truth, and an enemy " to all *ſlaviſh hierarchies, I could almoſt wiſh they* " *may perſevere in their obſtinacy.*" Sermons on the Chriſtian Doctrine, by Richard Price, D. D. &c. 1787.

" If you *muſt* have a ſtate religion (for which I " own I ſee no occaſion whatever) let it be at leaſt " ſomething *rational and intelligible*; ſomething that " mankind may ſee to afford a *natural* foundation " of good conduct here, and of reaſonable expec- " tation hereafter: and ſuch is the Unitarian doc- " trine*." Letter to the Right honourable William Pitt, by Joſeph Prieſtley, LL. D. &c.

" Happy

* I cannot help noticing in this place a droll coincidence of project; that wicked rogue Tom Woolſton, in the true ſpirit of badinage, propoſed to give up Chriſtianity, and *ſolemnly* recommended his " golden religion of nature " in its ſtead. See Woolſt. Diſc. vi. p. 28.

Woolſton,

" Happy will the world be, when *theſe truths* " ſhall be every where acknowledged and practiſed " upon. Religious bigotry, that cruel demon, will " be then laid aſleep; *ſlaviſh governments* and *ſlaviſh* " *hierarchies* will then ſink." " So injurious are " civil eſtabliſhments of formularies of faith and " worſhip, that it has long been a ſubject of diſpute, " which is worſt in its effects on ſociety, *ſuch* a re- " ligion, or *ſpeculative Atheiſm. For my own part,* " *I could almoſt give the preference to the latter.*" Obſervations on the Importance of the American Revolution, by Richard Price, D. D. LL. D.

" If we be ſucceſsful in the *propagation of the* " *truth,* we need not give ourſelves *any concern about* " *the meaſures of government* concerning it. Cauſes " will always produce their effects; and, though the " caſes be of a different nature, it is as certain an " inference as any in geometry, that an *Unitarian* " *people cannot long be ſubject to a Trinitarian eſtabliſh-* " *ment.* Things are already in ſuch a train, that, " though no perſon can foreſee the particular time

Woolſton, however, was not chargeable with the *furor innovantium.* This arch-diſputant well knew that there was an inſuperable obſtacle to any *ſerious* propoſal of the kind; he was aware " that every king and queen at their coronation were " obliged to take and ſubſcribe *an oath to preſerve the ſettlement* " *of the Church of England, and the doctrine, diſcipline, and go-* " *vernment* thereof, within the kingdoms of England and Ire- " land, and the territories thereunto belonging; and that this " Act (5 Ann. c. 5.) ſhould be held a fundamental and eſſential " part of the Union betwixt the two kingdoms of England and " Scotland."

" and manner of the change in favour of Unita-
" rianiſm, we may be as certain of its taking place,
" as if we ſaw it actually accompliſhed." See Sermon on the Importance and Extent of Free Enquiry, &c. by Joſ. Prieſtley, LL. D.

" Religious improvement muſt be expected to
" keep pace with other improvements. It is ob-
" ſervable that the ſcriptures place the *downfall of*
" *antichriſt* before the commencement of the uni-
" verſal kingdom of the Meſſiah. Previouſly to
" this, it muſt loſe that connection with civil power
" which has debaſed it, and which now, in almoſt
" every Chriſtian country, turns it into a ſcheme of
" worldly emolument and policy, and ſupports
" error and ſuperſtition under the name of it. The
" abſurdities fathered upon it muſt be explod-
" ed," &c. See Sermon in the Old Jewry Meeting-houſe, London, April 1787, by Richard Price, D. D.

" Aſſure yourſelf, Sir, that the Unitarian doc-
" trine has already taken deep root in the church
" itſelf; and it is a plant of a ſtrong conſtitution,
" and makes vigorous ſhoots. The preſent con-
" troverſy greatly quickens its growth; and, in ſpite
" of all the efforts of churchmen, and of all that as
" a ſtateſman you can do to aſſiſt them, the doc-
" trines which conſtitute the peculiar faith of the
" church of England *muſt fall before it*; and, if the
" hierarchy will obſtinately maintain theſe doctrines,
" and keep up the ſubſcription to them, it muſt in
" time fall with them." Letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt, by Joſeph Prieſtley, LL. D.

" The

" The late (American) war did great good by " diſſeminating juſt ſentiments of the rights of " mankind, and the nature of legitimate govern- " ment.—But in its termination, the war has done " ſtill greater good, by preſerving the new govern- " ments from that deſtruction in which they muſt " have been involved, *had Britain conquered:* by " providing, in a ſequeſtered continent, a place of " refuge for oppreſt men in every region of the " world; and by laying the foundation there of an " empire which may be the ſeat of liberty, ſci- " ence, and virtue, and from whence there is reaſon " to hope theſe ſacred bleſſings will ſpread till they " become univerſal, *and the time arrives when kings* " *and prieſts ſhall have no more power to oppreſs, and* " *that ignominious ſlavery, which has hitherto debaſed* " *the world, is exterminated.*" Obſervations on the Importance of the American Revolution, by Richard Price, D. D. LL.D. F.R.S.

It is unneceſſary to multiply inſtances, from the various publications of theſe patrons of novelty, of their averſion from regular government; but, in juſtice to them, I ſhould obſerve, that they have been ſenſible of their injudicious conduct, and in ſome late ſober expoſitions have attempted to appeaſe the cenſure of men and the vengeance of the laws *. Their apologiſts

* The reverend author of the " Obſervations on the Im- " portance of the American Revolution," honeſty acknowledges, that, in conſequence of *the warm part* he had taken in the rebellion of the Britiſh colonies, he had expoſed himſelf to *much* abuſe, and to *ſome danger* from the violated laws of his country.

apologiſts too have been buſy in gloſſing over their indecent labours; have oppoſed to the charge of faction, *the force, the nerve, the beauty of metaphor*; and have qualified the *principles* of rebellion, by attributing *to honeſt zeal its wonted imprudence, but upright intentions.* But what opinion can we have of that cauſe, or of its advocates, who are either involved in a train of indiſcretions, or engaged in a tiſſue of apologies? Will the ample cloak of reformation cover all the ſins of reſtleſs zeal? or will unbluſhing revolutioniſts veil over every unſightly excreſcence? In defiance of thoſe important and puzzling apothegms, "That an "independent parliament is incompatible with the "exiſtence of the monarchy;" and, "That a "church polity, conformable to the genius of the "civil conſtitution, is indiſpenſably neceſſary to na-"tional religion;" we have a flaming patriot declaring from the roſtrum, that he has worked himſelf up beyond his ſtrength, and is well nigh exhauſted, at the glorious proſpect of "eſtabliſhing

This gentleman, in ſome later editions of his ſermons, particularly of his popular diſcourſe on the love of our country, November 1789, has thought it prudent to ſoften down ſome offenſive ſtrokes of oratory. This has been judged a neceſſary practice by Dr. Prieſtley, and particularly in his ſermon at Birmingham, on the conduct to be obſerved by the Diſſenters upon the eve of their application to parliament; in which he has atoned for former inflammatory expreſſions, in ſome degree, by a calm and rational eloquence. And it pains one to obſerve an untimely hint, "That more relaxations are intended than have been "as yet ſolicited."

"Latet anguis in herba!" — "theiſm

" theiſm on the ruins of the epiſcopal hierarchy, " and the *independence of the three ſtates of* the Bri- " tiſh government on one another, in which its " eſſence conſiſts *." Yet, a little after, we hear the ſame divine, in the ſame ſanctuary, forgetful of former political ſpeculations, affirming with groſs inconſiſtency, that the monarchy is eſſentially *dependent*, and the king a mere creature of the public. " A king is *no more* than the firſt ſervant of the pub- " lic, created by it, maintained by it, and reſpon- " ſible to it: and all the homage paid him, is due " to him *on no other account* than the community. " His ſacredneſs is the ſacredneſs of the community: " his authority is the authority of the community: " and the term Majeſty, which it is uſual to apply " to him, is *by no means* his own majeſty, but the " majeſty of the people †." I forbear commenting on the indecency of handling this ſubject in the pulpit, and the tendency of ſuch doctrine to inflame the conventicle. But I muſt aſk theſe delegates of evangelical peace, whether they are in actual poſ- ſeſſion of their conſciences, when they thus proſtitute the dignity of the laws, the honour of the crown,

* See a Diſcourſe on the Evidence of a future Period of Improvement, with the *means* and *duty* of promoting it, delivered at the Old Jewry Meeting-houſe, April 25, 1787, before the *ſupporters of a new academical inſtitution*, by Richard Price, D.D. F.R.S. &c.

† See a Diſcourſe on the Love of our Country, delivered at the Old Jewry Meeting-houſe, November 1789, by Richard Price, D.D. F.R.S. &c.

the

the rights of the church, and the privileges of parliament, to the viſionary liberties of the people, to be trampled on by overheated ſectaries,

Ignavum pecus, quod a præſepibus arcent?

Experience has long ſince convinced us of the fatal conſequences that have flowed from this rant for liberty and the rights of conſcience: but when politics ſuperſede piety, and zeal takes place of order,

"'Tis too much prov'd, that with devotion's viſage,
"And pious action, men do ſugar o'er
"The devil himſelf."

I hope I ſhall not wound the feelings of theſe reverent votaries of privilege, when I tell them that they greatly overrate this majeſty of the people, and that the rights and liberties of the ſubject may be urged too far, and become, even in theſe *enlightened days*, as neceſſarily to be reſiſted, eſpecially on the *eve of innovation*, as ever prerogative was in the laſt century: becauſe "political innovations commonly "produce many effects beſides thoſe that are in-"tended. The direct conſequence is often the leaſt "important. Incidental, remote, and unthought-"of evils or advantages frequently exceed the good "that is deſigned, or the inconveniency that is fore-"ſeen *." Far be it from me to intrench upon the rights of man, or the dignity of human nature, or

* See Archdeacon Paley's Principles of Moral and Political Philoſophy, p. 467.

what

what has of late been called the majeſty of the people, from whom the chief magiſtrate originally derives his power, and to whom he affords by a reciprocal tie his protection. The abſolute rights and civil liberties of Engliſhmen are clearly defined; they have the ſecurity of perſon and property; the right of ſelf-defence; the conſtitution and power of parliaments; and the limitation of royal prerogative; the regular adminiſtration of juſtice, and the right of petitioning for redreſs of grievances. Theſe are their rights, whether as individuals, or members of the community: and as to any other popular privilege, undefined by the municipal laws, the conſtitution acknowledges none; but, on the contrary, has reſtrained the *natural liberty* of mankind by laws that are abſolutely neceſſary for the preſervation of ſociety.

But there is a rock on which republicans in a monarchical government are generally apt to ſplit. They lift up the dignity of the people, and miſinterpret and depreſs the royal authority, and, reducing the chief magiſtrate to the condition of a ſervant, inſinuating that his power is merely delegated, and reaſſumable at will, they effectually deſtroy the very eſſence of a monarchical conſtitution. Is our celebrated revolutioniſt yet to learn, that the king's prerogative is independent of the people; that his crown deſcends to him by the poſitive conſtitution of the kingdom; and, notwithſtanding parliamentary limitations, the crown retains its deſcendible quality, and is hereditary in the prince to whom it is limited:

mited: and if he maintains the contract betwixt himſelf and his people, which is expreſſed in his coronation oath, and is founded in the very nature of ſociety; that is, if the king governs his people according to the laws, and *maintains the eſtabliſhed religion of his country*, he is *then* entitled to our reverence and allegiance, not merely as the *firſt ſervant of the public*, but as poſſeſſing the conſtitutional and legal attributes of *perſonal ſovereignty*, *abſolute perfection*, *and political perpetuity?* Is the champion of *rights* yet to learn, that, for the preſervation of this monarchy, and the maintenance of the regal dignity, *adherence to the king's enemies* is puniſhable as high treaſon *; *and contempt of his perſon and government*, is ſubject to *fine and impriſonment* †: that, for the defence of religion, and the ſecurity of the public peace, *reviling the eſtabliſhed ordinances* ‡, *tumultuous petitioning* §, *pretended prophecies and libels* ‖, are all reſtrained by forfeiture, impriſonment, and infamous corporal puniſhment?

There is in ſome men an innate principle of oppoſition to thoſe whoſe province it is to reprove, to reſtrain, and to rebuke; and, whatever the *friends* of ſuch men may think of their multiplied indiſcre-

* By the ſtatute of Edward III.

† By ſpeaking or writing contemptuouſly, &c. ſee 4th Ann. c. 8. and 6th Ann. c. 7.

‡ Seditious words, ſpoken in derogation of the eſtabliſhed religion, are indictable, *as tending to a breach of the peace.* See 1 Haw. 7. and 1 Eliz. c. 2. § 4.

§ By the 13th Charles II. c. 1. and 1ſt George, c. 5.

‖ See 5th Eliz. c. 15. and 3 Inſt. 128 and 129.

tions,

tions, *their enemies* will be apt to impute their diſguſt of ordinances, to a dread of inſulted authority, and their cry for liberty, to the apprehenſions of a priſon.

But I may be told that our reverend politician has avowed himſelf an enemy to commonwealths, and an advocate for monarchy. I know this: and he has done more. With wonderful verſatility of talent, he has diſowned proſelytiſm, and retained the ſpirit and zeal for converſion *; has abandoned controverſy, in the midſt of polemical poſitions †; and, ſheltering himſelf behind ſome equivocal axiom of the celebrated Monteſquieu, has condemned democracy, and diſſeminated republican principles ‡.

A character

* Compare "Sermons on the Chriſtian Doctrine, as received "by the different Denominations of Chriſtians," by R. Price; and his "Diſcourſe on the Evidence of a future Period of Im-"provement;" with "Obſervations on the American Revolu-"tion," by Richard Price, D.D. paſſim.

† In the advertiſement prefixed to Dr. Price's "Sermons "on the Chriſtian Doctrine," he declares his reſolution not to engage in controverſy; yet in the body of the ſame work, he not only charges churchmen with *idolatry*, but enters into a curious compariſon of the Athanaſian and Socinian ſyſtems, declaring, that in regard to the *Deity of Chriſt*, "as far as Trini-"tarians and Socinians have ideas, they are agreed on this "ſubject; and the war they have been maintaining againſt one "another, has been entirely a war of words."

‡ In his "Diſcourſe on the Evidence of a future Period of "Improvement," the Doctor expreſsly diſclaims republican principles; and has gone ſo far as to acknowledge that our conſtitution of government is better adapted to this country than

A character ſo paradoxical, we are led to think, could neither be the favourite of a party, nor the idol of the tabernacle, now proſtituted to *civil dudgeon* and *phrenetic mood*; and we might reaſonably expect that diſſidents would no longer impute iniquity to eſtabliſhments of faith,

" ——— when their own biſhop
" Turns inſurrection to religion;
" Suppoſed ſincere and holy in his thoughts,
" Derives from Heaven his quarrel and his cauſe,
" Tells them he doth beſtride a bleeding land
" Gaſping for life.——
" And more, or leſs, do flock to follow him."

But this age is the age of *experiment:* the principles of *civil diſſolution* and political augury are tranſmitted and imbibed with theological precepts; and ſpeculative ſaints have arrived at the temple of fame, through the eccentric paths of *ſtate chemiſtry* and *divination:* nay, to prove the utmoſt powers of combination, a projector has been found to re-

than any other: yet, in moſt other publications, particularly in his late Sermon " On the Love of our Country," he entirely depreciates the regal authority, and condemns all interpoſition of civil power in matters of religion: and in his " Obſervations " on the Importance of the American Revolution," he glories in the emancipation of our late fellow-ſubjects from regal tyranny, and, kindling with a zeal for reformation, he fervently petitions Heaven " *to put a ſpeedy end to all civil eſtabliſhments* " *of religion!*" unmindful that the great charter has *inſeparably* woven the eſtabliſhment into the civil conſtitution; and that the monarchy can ſtand no longer than the *doctrine, diſcipline, and preſent government* of the Church of England is maintained. See 12th W. III. c. 2. and 5th Ann. c. 5.

commend

commend the abaſers of monarchy, and the declared foes of church eſtabliſhments, *as well qualified* to fill the offices of a regal and epiſcopal government *.

I ſhall now take leave of theſe gentlemen for a ſeaſon; but, as we may meet again, I think it proper to aſſure them, that in my ſtrictures on their principles, I gratify no perſonal enmity; their zeal for *godly-thorough reformation*, as far as it has operated on their conduct as ſubjects and as citizens, is a fair object of animadverſion: and, though they have offended againſt the rules of decency and good order, and have violated the laws of their country, by wounding her conſtitution, and aſſailing the beſt intereſts of her religion, through the medium of *her own preſs*, it is my ſincere wiſh that they may never be overtaken by popular inſult, or perſonal injury.—Errors in politics, as well as in divinity, ſhould be treated with the ſame correctives as errors in ethics or philoſophy: prejudice ſhould be ſubdued by reaſon, and opinions ſhould be condemned, not by the powers of magiſtracy, but upon the detection of ſophiſm and fallacy; and religious as well as political orthodoxy may be well ſupported without an arm of fleſh; for upon ſound argument and fair diſcuſſion, truth will always obtain the

* Mr. Fox, in the debate upon the repeal of the Teſts, March 3d 1790, noticed the writings of Dr. Price againſt the hierarchy; but he inſiſted that there would be no more danger to the conſtitution, in admitting him to *any office* in the ſtate, than there was in permitting the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who objected to the preſent repreſentation of the people in parliament, to be at the head of the treaſury.

victory. But it by no means follows, that legal reſtrictions are either impolitic, unneceſſary, or unjuſt; and, although nothing is to be dreaded from controverſy, except when giving riſe to tumult and commotion, yet there have been occaſions when the public ſecurity has depended on the very laws that are now ſo obnoxious, and to which indeed we are indebted for our preſent enjoyment of civil and religious liberty: and, however the principles of humanity and benevolence ſhould reſtrain the execution of penal laws in matters of opinion, yet the common policy of prevention will teach a well-conſtituted ſtate to preſerve certain barriers betwixt liberty and licentiouſneſs. "Oh, 'tis excellent to "have a giant's ſtrength, but, it is tyrannous to uſe "it like a giant!"—Shakeſpear.

It is a ſtale and common practice with innovators, to impute to the advocates for eſtabliſhments and regular government, an adherence to High-Church principles and prerogative: but let me aſk that man, who is unbiaſſed by education, by religious prejudice or connection, whether, in the preſent times, more miſchief is not to be apprehended from a clamour for abſtract rights, and a zeal for reformation, than from any undue influence of prerogative, or any ambitious deſigns of churchmen? We have a monarch who has inflexibly purſued a juſt, equitable, and conſiſtent conduct, who has conſidered his own intereſt as interwoven with the welfare of his ſubjects, and whoſe happineſs has conſiſted in promoting the proſperity of his

his people: we have a religion, I ſpeak of it as an eſtabliſhment, that diſowns perſecution, and abhors every meaſure ſubverſive of liberty, and which, through the bleſſed ſpirit of toleration, is the very prop and ſupport of ſocial happineſs. Our clergy, as a collective body, are equally diſtinguiſhed for their learning, mildneſs, and liberality, as they are for their abhorrence of profligacy and libertiniſm. A pure adminiſtration of juſtice prevails amongſt us, as pure at leaſt as the ſtate of things here will admit of. Our judges are incorrupt; queſtions of right and wrong are juſtly decided; and the intereſts of the individual are preſerved from the griping hands of the oppreſſor. A tide of wealth and proſperity is flowing in upon us; the affections of a grateful people are ſecured by mild, equal, and beneficial laws; whilſt national honour is maintained abroad in unuſual ſplendour. Such is the ſpirit and the effect of our happy conſtitution. As free ſubjects of a free government, we may cheriſh our allegiance without betraying ourſelves into ſervitude, and we may exerciſe our freedom, without owing any *vaſſalage*, except to thoſe laws which are of our own preſcribing. The efforts of faction and ambition may indeed excite a feeble murmur, and promote a partial diſcontent; but an enlightened people cannot be long deluded by falſe reaſoning and falſe patriotiſm. "The voice of joy and gladneſs ſhall put to ſilence the voice of him that reproacheth;" and a juſt tribute of applauſe ſhall be paid to thoſe who are to perpetuate theſe bleſſings

to us, with the ardour of Britiſh gratitude, and in the ſpirit of Roman approbation. "Quapropter, "de ſummâ ſalute noſtrâ, patres conſcripti, de con- "jugibus ac liberis, de aris et focis, de fanis ac "templis, de totius urbis tectis ac ſedibus, de im- "perio, de libertate, de ſalute patriæ, deque uni- "verſâ republicâ decernite diligenter, ut inſtitu- "iſtis, ac fortiter *."

I now reſume my compariſon of the conduct of the Proteſtant Diſſenters in 1789, with that of the Proteſtant Aſſociators in 1780.

Another meaſure adopted by the inſurgents in 1780, in *vindication of liberty*, has been in no ſmall degree copied by the preſent aſſociated body of Diſſenters. I mean the attempt to obtain an alteration of the eſtabliſhed laws, by *overawing the legiſlature*. The proceedings in each caſe are not exactly alike, but the tendency was the ſame, and equally unconſtitutional. In the firſt inſtance, the danger to the conſtitution was not ſo imminent as the outrage on the perſons of the ſenators was offenſive. The tumultuous petitioning of the *bellua*

* "Wherefore, ſenators, go on as you have begun, with dili- "gence and reſolution, to provide for the public ſafety, and "that of our wives and children, for our temples and altars, the "city and its buildings, the empire, the liberty and welfare of "our country, and for the good of the whole commonwealth."
CICERO.

centiceps

venticeps will generally defeat its own intentions; and in this caſe, the firmneſs and intrepidity with which parliament reſiſted the daring violation of its freedom and privilege, contributed alike to the preſervation of the laws and the maintenance of its dignity. But now the repreſentatives of the people are to be aſſailed leſs hoſtilely indeed, but more inſidiouſly; not with open acts of violence, but with the covert evils of ſtratagem and intrigue. "And covert evils are generally more dangerous "to all governments than thoſe which are appa-"rent, and capable of exciting immediate alarm *." In either caſe, the deſertion of their conſtitutional duties was the object; in the former, by a daring outrage on the perſons of the ſenators and the freedom of debate; in the latter, by a deliberate and artful attack on their integrity and independence; by a cenſure on ſuch as had oppoſed their repeated applications for a repeal of the Teſts, and by a ſolemn declaration to return ſuch only, at the next general election, as would pledge themſelves to ſupport the private intereſts of a party. And, however offenſive the conduct of the aſſociators in 1780 might be, I have no heſitation in ſaying, that the meaſures of the aſſociators in 1789 were pregnant with greater miſchief to the conſtitution. As this charge is of a ſerious nature, it muſt be treated with attention, and if it is not eſtabliſhed on fact, the

* See Rights of the Proteſtant Diſſenters aſſerted, &c. part 2. c. 5.

accuſer muſt be overwhelmed in the obloquy deſervedly due to calumniators. Diſmiſſing then for a while, the firſt tribe of inſurgents, we are to inquire how far the conduct of the preſent Aſſociated Diſſenters tends to overawe and influence the legiſlature. It is a fundamental principle in the conſtitution of this country, "That elections ſhould "be free, and the elected independent." In direct violation of this ſalutary maxim, the Proteſtant Diſſenters have concerted plans, which in their operation ſtrike directly at the freedom of election, and the independence of the repreſentative.

Having formed confederacies throughout the kingdom, with a view to the repeal of thoſe ancient teſts, which the *majority* of their fellow-citizens have always conſidered and repeatedly declared to be the great ſecurity and defence of the crown, and the permanency of the Britiſh conſtitution; and judging that their intended application would meet with little redreſs from that parliament, which after mature diſcuſſion had already twice ſolemnly declared againſt it, they look forward to the period of its diſſolution, and violently ſtrain every nerve to effect the return of a better-tempered legiſlature. At the ſeaſon then of a general election, a ſeaſon at all times of faction and diviſion, when the minds of men are agitated by contending intereſts, and the little weakneſſes that are too often found amongſt the beſt, float uppermoſt; in this hour of mental infirmity, the unbluſhing advocates of civil and religious

ligious liberty preſs forward, and urge *a teſt* * on thoſe very men who are to thunder for them in the ſenate, in behalf of *abſtract rights and natural privilege*, in ſupport of *abſolute liberty*, *juſt and true liberty*, *equal and impartial liberty* †. This palpable abſurdity would not be credited on my bare aſſertion: I am neceſſitated therefore to adduce other proof in confirmation of the fact; and it is nothing leſs than the *cool deliberate reſolution* of a body of Proteſtant Diſſenters, aſſembled at Bolton in Lancaſhire ‡. "It is highly expedient and proper for "all Diſſenting freeholders and electors through-"out the kingdom, in every county, city, and bo-"rough, to require by letter, of all candidates for "a ſeat in parliament, with whom they are ſeve-"rally concerned, an *explicit declaration* of their "views reſpecting the Teſt and Corporation Acts, "and *to refuſe their votes to every man who will not* "*engage* to ſupport a repeal of acts which *appear* "*to be* obnoxious, intolerant, and unjuſt: *and of all* "*penal ſtatutes againſt religious principles.*"

Here is a reſolution as eminent for zeal, as it is

* This argument was moſt happily urged by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the debate on Mr. Fox's motion, March 3d, 1790; and it was, although on a diſſimilar occaſion, touched upon with pointed application by a former miniſter: "It does "not become thoſe who will not obſerve covenants or treaties, "to preſs them upon others." Sir Thomas Bodley's ſpeech to the Dutch, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

† See Right of Proteſtant Diſſenters, &c. aſſerted, p. 50. note; and preface to the firſt edition of the Confeſſional.

‡ December 17th, 1789.

for abſurdity, and which holds forth a ridiculous mixture of latitude and intolerance!

In a free country every thing is to be apprehended from an undue exertion of privilege, and to delude or entrap the repreſentatives of the people by influence and ſtratagem, is ungenerous and unconſtitutional. If the Diſſenters were the only perſons concerned in the repeal of the eſtabliſhed Teſts, even then their plea for a redreſs of grievances ſhould not paſs without a ſtrict examination, becauſe the means which they have made uſe of to carry their point have excited ſuſpicion; but when, under the pretext of religion and liberty, the very exiſtence of that eſtabliſhment for which we have been ſo long contending, is attacked, the cool deliberate reſolution to influence the freedom of election, and to enſnare the judgment of that man who is to be the repreſentative, not of the Diſſenters only, but of every member in the community, rouſes the attention of every one who is not indifferent to his real intereſts; for the ſubject comes home to him, and his conſcience and reaſon muſt tell him, in ſpite of fine-ſpun arguments, that the conduct of theſe men is *not to be juſtified in this particular*, by any pretext of perſonal inconvenience, or claim for private emolument.

But theſe men aſſure us they are *good citizens, friends to civil liberty, friends to the eſtabliſhments in church and ſtate*, and that they are only adopting *ſome conſtitutional meaſures to effect their deſireable purpoſe*. When their plaintive brethren aimed at

the repeal of the offenſive ſtatutes in 1780, they exhibited a juſter knowledge of the Britiſh conſtitution, and betrayed a jealouſy of the honour of their ſenators, unknown to the aſſociators of 1789. They expreſſed, in their petition to parliament, an apprehenſion, leſt the Roman Catholics, by the indulgence recently granted to them, "*ſhould influence* "*our elections in future parliaments, which would* "*tend to the deſtruction of our happy conſtitution* *." They too, but a few hours before they ſubverted the civil power, and ere

> "The burning ruins with a fiercer ray
> "Supply'd the ſun, and counterfeited day:"

They too, in the very act of overawing parliament, were *good citizens, friends to civil liberty, and the eſtabliſhments in church and ſtate.* "Your petitioners "preſume, that their peaceable deportment, and "the *conſtitutional ſteps* they have taken to obtain "redreſs, will meet with the *approbation* of this "honourable houſe *." There is an animation in Roman politics that captivates while it convinces: "An tu populum Romanum eſſe illum putas qui "conſtat ex iis, qui mercede conducuntur? qui "impelluntur, ut vim afferant Magiſtratibus? ut "obſideant ſenatum? cui populo duces Lentidios, "Lollios, Sergios, præfeceras. O ſpeciem, digni-

* See the petition of Proteſtant Aſſociators, preſented by lord G. Gordon, at the bar of the Houſe of Commons, June 2d, 1780, ſigned by 40,000; and ſaid to be brought up by 100,000 *vindicators of liberty,*

" tatemque populi Romani, quam reges, quam na-
" tiones exteræ, quam gentes ultimæ pertimeſcunt;
" multitudinem hominum ex ſervis conductis, ex
" facinoroſis, ex egentibus congregatam." — Cicero.

The text may be eaſily applied, I leave it to others to interpret; but there needs no commentary.

But I turn from theſe unjuſtifiable meaſures to an object that claims peculiar attention. A pamphlet, anonymous indeed, comes forward to the public with ſingular commendation. The author profeſſes " to give an accurate narrative of facts, and to " ſtate the principles on which the Proteſtant Diſ-
" ſenters found their claim to a complete tolera-
" tion." And he has been uſhered into public notice under the ſanction of a noble earl *, and the applauſes of a diſtinguiſhed commoner †. The firſt commends this pamphlet as the beſt that has been publiſhed *upon religion*, for a whole century; the laſt applauds it as a moſt accurate and fair ſtatement of the Diſſenters rights; and it has obtained equal commendation from authority ‡ much higher

* Earl Stanhope.

† Sir H. Hoghton. See Debates, March 3d, 1790.

‡ " The narrative part of this piece ſtates fully, and we think
" fairly, the hiſtory of the Teſt laws: the argumentative part
" reaſons clearly and forcibly on the injuſtice and impolicy of
" excluding from public offices a part of the community, who,
" &c. &c. The facts and arguments, ſtated in this publication, ſo
" deciſively eſtabliſh the expediency as well as the juſtice of the
" repeal

higher in the court of criticiſm. A publication ſo favourably announced awakens curioſity and attracts attention, and it ſhould contain important, accurate, and impartial intelligence *. The importance of this pamphlet to the intereſts of religion, and the correctneſs and fidelity of its hiſtorical references, may be the ſubject of future inveſtigation; at preſent I am to examine whether it is calculated to promote undue influence, and to affect the freedom of elec-

" repeal of the Teſt Acts, that we cannot ſuppoſe that it will be " long in the power of the obſolete cry, *The church is in danger*, " to prevent it." Month. Rev. vol. lxxx. p. 561.

* The author of " The Right of the Proteſtant Diſſenters to " a complete Toleration aſſerted," informs us, in his preface, that he was employed but little more *than ſix weeks* in *writing and publiſhing* the firſt edition of his work: an intimation that implies either negligence and hurry, or ſuperiority of abilities. As the ſubject is very important, and comprehends not only the deſigns of the Diſſenters, but the welfare of the eſtabliſhed religion, we may fairly conclude that this Treatiſe, on which ſo little time has been beſtowed, will neither ſtand the teſt of examination, nor obtain diſtinction for accuracy and fidelity: conſcious of deficiency, the writer refers us to a publication of the Reverend Mr. Fownes, of Shrewſbury, intitled, " An Inquiry " into the Principles of Toleration." The work of this reſpectable miniſter has not as yet come within my notice; but, to this fortreſs and rock of refuge for Diſſenting principles, I ſhall turn with eagerneſs, in expectation of finding ſound argument and fair deduction. In the mean time, I ſhall remark, that precipitation in a matter ſo complicated and involved, inevitably incurs that cenſure which is deſtined to fallacious facts, ſophiſtical inferences, and flimſy argument. And, whatever the friends of this aſſerter of rights may think, his abilities, however tranſcendent, will not ſecure that reputation of which his negligence and artifice have bereaved him.

tion,

tion, and the independence of the elected. And here, if I might hazard a conjecture, it appears, that from this approved model, this *prototype of reformation*, the Proteſtant Diſſenters have framed their late reſolutions and proceedings.

This writer, after having beſtowed a plentiful ſhare of cenſure on the whole bench of biſhops, as "ſupporters of tenets in public, which in private "they utterly diſclaim," ſums up the credenda et agenda of Religious Diſſenſion in this animated peroration. "Let not the Proteſtant Diſſenters "put their truſt in king, miniſter, or prelates; but "let them *confide in their own exertions*, the juſtice "of their cauſe, and the generoſity of the nation. "Let them not be withheld by promiſes, or intimidated by threats, from proſecuting their deſign, "or *uſing all the helps which Providence has placed "in their power*. There is not an individual among "them, however humble his ſituation, however "confined his ſphere of action, who may not exert "himſelf with effect. By converſation with his "neighbours, by correſpondence with his friends, "he may conciliate our enemies, and make the "lukewarm zealous. Beſides, the time cannot be "far remote, when the repreſentatives of the people muſt give an account of their truſt to their "conſtituents; and that power which the Diſſenters "ſo ſignally diſplayed at the diſſolution of the laſt "parliament, muſt have conſiderable influence at "the concluſion of the preſent. Such a criſis in "favour of the Diſſenters may not occur in the re-

"volution

" volution of ages; *and it is a duty to themſelves* " *and their poſterity to take advantage of it.* They " are peculiarly the guardians of religious liberty, " and will ſhortly have an opportunity to ſhew " their attachment to its friends. Thoſe who ſhall " have approved their regard for the rights of con- " ſcience, and voted for the repeal of the Teſts, " may go down with confidence to their conſti- " tuents, who are *Diſſenters, and friends of religious* " *liberty*; while the *obſtinate advocates for perſecution* " *can have no claim to their aſſiſtance* *."

This is the Catholic creed of Proteſtant Diſſenſion; and, without a queſtion, the damnatory clauſes ſavour ſtrongly of political Calviniſm. But is the eve of the diſſolution of parliament to be the eve of the violation of ſenatorial privilege? Is the ſuffrage of the candidate to be pre-engaged to ſupport an unknown ſyſtem of reformation? his faith pledged to perſonal intereſts, or his reluctance to make ſhipwreck of parliamentary virtue, wounded by perſonal reſentment? Yet ſo it is! And I have lived to ſee the day, when the repreſentative of a free people is to be intimidated into compliance with party views, or branded as *an obſtinate advocate for perſecution!*

Every elector is in poſſeſſion of civil privileges and conſtitutional rights; and if he is wiſe, he will delegate them as pure as he has received them; and when in the act of ſurrendering his moſt valu-

* Right of the Proteſtant Diſſenters to a complete Toleration aſſerted, p. 97.

able

able intereſts, his liberty, to the guardianſhip of another, he will take care not to accompany it with a fetter. A combination of men may declaim upon their rights to dictate to their candidate; but that man muſt have more than Machiavelian craft and ingenuity to perſuade me, that this boaſted right is *an active power* to hamper the freedom of others, or to invade the privileges of their fellow-citizens. In ſhort, however I may abhor the inſults offered to the legiſlature by the aſſociators in 1780, I have no heſitation in ſaying, that a cool premeditated attack on the freedom of election, and on the delicacy, the honour, and independence of a Britiſh ſenator, is full as alarming to the general intereſts of the public, as an outrage committed on the perſon of majeſty itſelf.

But we are told that this meaſure has a precedent: "That power which the Diſſenters ſo ſignally diſplayed at the diſſolution of the laſt parliament, muſt have conſiderable influence at the concluſion of the preſent." And will precedent ſanction what is inconſiſtent with reaſon and ſound policy? So thought faction of old. "*Vivimus ad exempla, nec ratione componimur, ſed conſuetudine abducimur.*" It is true this meaſure has a precedent; a precedent indeed of the ſame complexion, but of a very different date from that alluded to. And as it applies in many inſtances to the ſubject under diſcuſſion; I ſhall be excuſed, even by the Diſſenters themſelves, for quoting it in the words of Burnet. The biſhop, after remarking

ing on the inſidious views of the Popiſh monarch James II. in ſetting out his declaration for toleration and liberty of conſcience in 1687, proceeds, " This gave great offence to all true patriots, as " well as to the whole church-party. The pre- " amble, that pretended ſo much love and charity, " and that condemned perſecution, ſounded ſtrange- " ly in the mouth of a Popiſh prince. Upon this, " a new ſet of addreſſes went round the Diſſenters. " And they who had ſo long reproached the Church " of England, as too courtly in their ſubmiſſions " and flatteries, ſeemed now to vie with them in " thoſe abject ſtrains. They magnified the king's " mercy and favour, and made great proteſtations " of fidelity and gratitude. Many promiſed to " endeavour, *that ſuch perſons ſhould be choſen to* " *ſerve in parliament, as ſhould concur with the king* " *in the enacting what he now granted ſo graciouſly.* " The king and his prieſts were delighted with theſe " addreſſes out of meaſure: and they ſeemed to " think that they had gained the nation, and had " now conquered thoſe who were hitherto their " moſt irreconcileable enemies. But ſeeing no hope " of prevailing on his parliament (to concur with " him in his aims at arbitrary power) he diſ- " ſolved it; but gave it out, that he would have a " new one before winter; and ſoon after ſet out on " a progreſs through ſome of the weſtern counties. " In the places through which he paſſed, the king " ſaw a viſible coldneſs both in the nobility and " gentry.

" gentry. On his part, he was very obliging to all " that came near him, and moſt particularly to the " *Diſſenters*, and to thoſe who had paſſed long " under *the notion of commonwealth's men.* He ran " out on the points of liberty of conſcience. He was " well pleaſed to hear all the ill-natured ſtories that " were brought him of the violences committed " of late, either by the juſtices of peace, or by the " clergy. *He every where* recommended to them " the chooſing ſuch parliament-men as would con- " cur with him in ſettling *this liberty* as firmly as " the Magna Charta had been: and to this he " never forgot to add, *the taking away the Teſts.* " Many books were now writ for liberty of con- " ſcience; *and, ſince all people ſaw what ſecurity the* " *Teſts gave*, theſe ſpoke of an equivalent to be " offered, that ſhould give a further ſecurity, beyond " what could be pretended from the Teſts."—The king was making every day a very arbitrary uſe of the power of changing the magiſtracy. The regulators, who aſſiſted him in this work, " were " for the moſt part Diſſenters gained by the court, " and they went on very boldly, and turned men " out upon every ſtory that was made of them; " and put ſuch men in their room as they confided " in. After this, the king ſent orders to the lords " lieutenants of the counties to examine the gentle- " men and freeholders upon three queſtions: the " firſt was, Whether, in caſe they ſhould be choſen " to ſerve in parliament, they would conſent to

" repeal

" repeal the penal laws, and thoſe for the Teſts? " the ſecond was, Whether they would give their " vote for chooſing ſuch men as would engage to " do that? And the third was, Whether they would " maintain the king's declaration?—In moſt of the " counties, the lords lieutenants put thoſe queſtions " in ſo careleſs a manner, that it was plain they did " not deſire they ſhould be anſwered in the affir- " mative. Some went further, and declared them- " ſelves againſt them. And a few of the more re- " ſolute refuſed to put them. They ſaid, this was " *the prelimiting and the packing a parliament, which* " *in its nature was to be free, and under no previous* " *engagement* *."

Here is a coalition indeed! a coalition of Popery and Diſſenſion in ſupport of religious freedom! The eve of the diſſolution of Parliament is the ſeaſon

" For party-ſaint to ſlip his fetter." HUD.

And Popery winks, whilſt Diſſenſion ſeeks her ſpiritual enlargement amidſt the cabals of a canvaſs, and the riots of an election.

* Burnet's Hiſtory of his own Times.

I diſmiſs

I diſmiſs the ſubject, and ſhall now take leave of my reader; and if theſe few obſervations on the principles and conduct of the Proteſtant Diſſenters ſhall have attracted his attention, it remains with him to conſider what inferences and what uſe may be drawn from them. He muſt remark, that, although there are many upright and pious men who diſſent from the eſtabliſhed Church, there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe that theſe are adherents to the preſent ſyſtem of reformation. He muſt recollect, from the inſtances adduced, that the appeal of the Diſſenters to hiſtory, in proof of their patriotiſm and political virtue, ſerves only to condemn their principles and their actions;—that their ſpecious vindication of civil and religious liberty has been the ſtale trick of reformers in all ages, *ad captandum vulgus*, calculated only for the fickle and unwary;—that their cenſure on the Eſtabliſhment, for confounding religion with politics, recoils with tenfold accuſation on their own heads;—that their pretended diſguſt of Teſts, when they are forging fetters for thoſe who are the peculiar guardians of liberty, is a groſs abſurdity;—that their determination to renew their attack on the eſtabliſhed laws of their country, *at every favourable opportunity*, menaces the public ſecurity, and deſtroys all confidence in them as citizens and ſubjects. In ſhort—that their eagerneſs to promote the private intereſts of their party, at the period of a diſſolution of parliament, is not only

only unfair and diſingenuous, but is ſufficient to awaken the apprehenſion of every man who is either a friend to public peace, or to the preſent happy conſtitution.

If indeed we could perceive any thing more of good order, of juſtice, or loyalty on the one part, or of meekneſs, charity, or benevolence on the other, likely to reſult from the projected reformation, we might ſuſpect our judgment, and condemn our prejudices. But, on the contrary, we have all the reaſon imaginable to conclude, that, ſhould thoſe fences of the conſtitution, thoſe bounds betwixt liberty and licentiouſneſs, be aboliſhed, conſequences moſt fatal to ſociety would enſue. What Solomon ſays concerning the "beginning of ſtrife," that it is like "the letting out of water," might then be exemplified: for, if theſe flood-gates were once opened, we know not where the inundation would ſtop. Whilſt one would be cavilling at ordinances, another contending againſt the admiſſion and authority of ſcripture, a third reforming church eſtabliſhments, and a fourth demoliſhing every ſemblance of epiſcopal government, we may well imagine, that the various opinions of the reformers, *now entruſted with executive power*, would create a ſpirit of oppoſition, not to be confined to argument and reaſoning, but that would inſenſibly draw in the arm of magiſtracy, in order to enforce a compliance with this or that favourite ſyſtem: and, if the horrors of civil war were not to be apprehended, we ſhould certainly ſee that ſcene of mutual intolerance re-

vived, which is one object of a regular eſtabliſh-ment to ſuppreſs.—But to take this reformation in its leſs frightful point of view. If once theſe fences, the Teſts, are thrown down, and a broad road to Babel is paved by civil authority, the ridicule of atheiſm, and the triumph of infidelity, would be complete. The unavoidable pollution of the altars of religion, and the diſtraction that would pervade her temples, whilſt one was crying out, "*Ecce in deſerto!*" and another, "*Ecce in penetra-*"*libus!*" would not only excite the mirth of the libertine, but would diſcompoſe the features of orthodoxy itſelf. Nor would the ſtate enjoy more tranquillity, or be expoſed to leſs confuſion: for, ſince the legiſlature is required to grant a repeal of "*every penal ſtatute againſt religious principles**," what an encouragement is there for future aſſociations? The gloomy ſuicide, and bold blaſphemer, the lewd ſabbath-breaker, and common ſwearer, may confederate with the rank advocates for bigamy and concubinage, and, pleading an exemption from penal ſtatutes againſt *their religious principles*, join the *cry for liberty, equal and impartial liberty*.—The confuſion in politics would not be leſs; Jews and Muſſulmen, Rabbins and Mufti, with all the untimely births, and miſcellaneous ſpawn of Chriſtianity, now ſhaped for comptrollers, clerks, and commiſſaries, would preſs forward to the various departments of vacant office and proſtrate ma-

* Reſolution of the Proteſtant Diſſenters of Bolton.

giſtracy. The routine of public buſineſs would be impeded, the ſolemnity of national council invaded, and the attention of government diſtracted

" Diſſentientis conditionibus
" Fœdis." HORACE.

Whilſt the only probable compenſation would be—the dulneſs of a levee relieved by a morrice-dance of ſectaries.

FINIS.

28 OCT 62